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THE PARISIANS

BY

THE RIGHT HON. LORD LYTTON

IN TWO VOLUMES

VOL. I.

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2 A

INTRODUCTORY CHAPTER.

THEY who chance to have read the "Coming Race" may perhaps remember that I, the adventurous discoverer of the land without a sun, concluded the sketch of my adventures by a brief reference to the malady which, though giving no perceptible notice of its encroachments, might, in the opinion of my medical attendant, prove suddenly fatal.

I had brought my little book to this somewhat melancholy close a few years before the date of its publication, and, in the meanwhile, I was induced to transfer my residence to Paris, in order to place myself under the care of an English physician, renowned for his successful treatment of complaints analogous to my own.

I was the more readily persuaded to undertake this journey, partly because I enjoyed a familiar acquaintance with the eminent physician referred to, who had commenced his career and founded his reputation in the United States, partly because I had become a solitary man, the ties of home broken, and dear friends of mine were domiciled in Paris, with whom I should be sure of tender sympathy and cheerful companionship. I had reason to be thankful for this change of residence: the skill of Dr. C—— soon restored me to health. Brought much into contact with various circles of Parisian society, I became acquainted with the persons, and a witness of the events,

that form the substance of the tale I am about to submit to the public, which has treated my former book with so generous an indulgence. Sensitively tenacious of that character for strict and unalloyed veracity, which, I flatter myself, my account of the abodes and manners of the Vril-ya has established, I could have wished to preserve the following narrative no less jealously guarded than its predecessor from the vagaries of fancy. But Truth undisguised, never welcome in any civilised community above ground, is exposed at this time to especial dangers in Paris; and my life would not be worth an hour's purchase if I exhibited her *in puris naturalibus* to the eyes of a people wholly unfamiliarised to a spectacle so indecorous. That care for one's personal safety, which is the first duty of thoughtful man, compels me therefore to reconcile the appearance of *la Vérité* to the *bienséances* of the polished society in which *la Liberté* admits no opinion not dressed after the last fashion.

Attired as fiction, Truth may be peacefully received; and, despite the necessity thus imposed by prudence, I indulge the modest hope that I do not in these pages unfaithfully represent certain prominent types of the brilliant population which has invented so many varieties of Koom-Posh;* and even when it appears hopelessly lost in the slough of a Glek-Nas, re-emerges fresh and lively as

* Koom-Posh, Glek-Nas. For the derivation of these terms and their metaphorical signification, I must refer the reader to the 'Coming Race,' chapter xii., on the language of the Vril-ya. To those who have not read or have forgotten that historical composition, it may be convenient to state briefly that Koom-Posh with the Vril-ya is the name for the government of the many, or the ascendancy of the most ignorant or hollow, and may be loosely rendered Hollow-Bosh. When Koom-Posh degenerates from popular ignorance into the popular ferocity which precedes its decease, the name for that state of things is Glek-Nas—viz., the universal strife-rot.

if from an invigorating plunge into the Fountain of Youth. *O Paris, foyer des idées, et œil du monde!*—animated contrast to the serene tranquillity of the Vril-ya, which, nevertheless, thy noisiest philosophers ever pretend to make the goal of their desires—of all communities on which shines the sun and descend the rains of heaven, fertilising alike wisdom and folly, virtue and vice, in every city men have yet built on this earth, mayest thou, O Paris, be the last to brave the wands of the Coming Race and be reduced into cinders for the sake of the common good!

TISH.

PARIS, *August* 28, 1872.

THE PARISIANS.

BOOK I.

CHAPTER I.

It was a bright day in the early spring of 1869. All Paris seemed to have turned out to enjoy itself. The Tuileries, the Champs Elysées, the Bois de Boulogne, swarmed with idlers. A stranger might have wondered where Toil was at work, and in what nook Poverty lurked concealed. A *millionnaire* from the London Exchange, as he looked round on the *magasins*, the equipages, the dresses of the women; as he inquired the prices in the shops and the rent of apartments,—might have asked himself, in envious wonder, How on earth do those gay Parisians live? What is their fortune? Where does it come from?

As the day declined, many of the scattered loungers crowded into the Boulevards; the *cafés* and *restaurants* began to light up.

About this time a young man, who might be some five or six and twenty, was walking along the Boulevard des Italiens, heeding little the throng through which he glided his solitary way: there was that in his aspect and bearing which caught attention. He looked a somebody; but though unmistakably a Frenchman, not a Parisian. His dress was not in the prevailing mode,—to a practised eye it betrayed the taste and the cut of a provincial tailor. His gait was not that of the Parisian—less lounging, more stately; and, unlike the Parisian, he seemed indifferent to the gaze of others.

Nevertheless there was about him that air of dignity or distinction which those who are reared from their cradle in the pride of birth acquire so unconsciously that it seems

hereditary and inborn. It must also be confessed that the young man himself was endowed with a considerable share of that nobility which Nature capriciously distributes among her favourites, with little respect for their pedigree and blazon—the nobility of form and face. He was tall and well shaped, with graceful length of limb and fall of shoulders; his face was handsome, of the purest type of French masculine beauty—the nose inclined to be aquiline, and delicately thin, with finely-cut open nostrils; the complexion clear, the eyes large, of a light hazel, with dark lashes, the hair of a chestnut brown, with no tint of auburn, the beard and moustache a shade darker, clipped short, not disguising the outline of lips, which were now compressed, as if smiles had of late been unfamiliar to them; yet such compression did not seem in harmony with the physiognomical character of their formation, which was that assigned by Lavater to temperaments easily moved to gaiety and pleasure.

Another man, about his own age, coming quickly out of one of the streets of the Chaussée d'Antin, brushed close by the stately pedestrian above described, caught sight of his countenance, stopped short, and exclaimed, "Alain!" The person thus abruptly accosted turned his eye tranquilly on the eager face, of which all the lower part was enveloped in black beard; and slightly lifting his hat, with a gesture of the head that implied, "Sir, you are mistaken; I have not the honour to know you," continued his slow indifferent way. The would-be acquaintance was not so easily rebuffed. "*Peste*," he said, between his teeth, "I am certainly right. He is not much altered—of course *I am;* ten years of Paris would improve an orang-outang." Quickening his step, and regaining the side of the man he had called "Alain," he said, with a well-bred mixture of boldness and courtesy in his tone and countenance—

"Ten thousand pardons if I am wrong. But surely I accost Alain de Kerouec, son of the Marquis de Rochebriant."

"True, sir; but——"

"But you do not remember me, your old college friend, Frederic Lemercier?"

"Is it possible?" cried Alain, cordially, and with an animation which changed the whole character of his coun-

tenance. "My dear Frederic, my dear friend, this is indeed good fortune! So you, too, are at Paris?"

"Of course; and you? Just come, I perceive," he added, somewhat satirically, as, linking his arm in his new-found friend's, he glanced at the cut of that friend's coat-collar.

"I have been here a fortnight," replied Alain.

"Hem! I suppose you lodge in the old Hotel de Rochebriant. I passed it yesterday, admiring its vast *façade*, little thinking you were its inmate."

"Neither am I; the hotel does not belong to me—it was sold some years ago by my father."

"Indeed! I hope your father got a good price for it; those grand hotels have trebled their value within the last five years. And how is your father? Still the same polished *grand seigneur?* I never saw him but once, you know; and I shall never forget his smile, *style grand monarque*, when he patted me on the head and tipped me ten napoleons."

"My father is no more," said Alain, gravely; "he has been dead nearly three years."

"*Ciel!* forgive me, I am greatly shocked. Hem! so you are now the Marquis de Rochebriant, a great historical name, worth a large sum in the market. Few such names left. Superb place your old *château*, is it not?"

"A superb place, No—a venerable ruin, Yes!"

"Ah, a ruin! so much the better. All the bankers are mad after ruins—so charming an amusement to restore them. You will restore yours, without doubt. I will introduce you to such an architect! has the *moyen âge* at his fingers' ends. Dear—but a genius."

The young Marquis smiled—for since he had found a college friend, his face showed that it could smile; smiled, but not cheerfully, and answered—

"I have no intention to restore Rochebriant. The walls are solid; they have weathered the storms of six centuries; they will last my time, and with me the race perishes."

"Bah! the race perish, indeed! you will marry. *Parlez-moi de ça*—you could not come to a better man. I have a list of all the heiresses at Paris, bound in russia leather. You may take your choice out of twenty. Ah, if I were

but a Rochebriant! It is an infernal thing to come into the world a Lemercier. I am a democrat, of course. A Lemercier would be in a false position if he were not. But if any one would leave me twenty acres of land, with some antique right to the De and a title, faith, would not I be an aristocrat, and stand up for my order? But now we have met, pray let us dine together. Ah! no doubt you are engaged every day for a month. A Rochebriant just new to Paris must be *fêté* by all the Faubourg."

"No," answered Alain, simply—"I am not engaged; my range of acquaintance is more circumscribed than you suppose."

"So much the better for me. I am luckily disengaged to-day, which is not often the case, for I am in some request in my own set, though it is not that of the Faubourg. Where shall we dine?—at the Trois Frères?"

"Wherever you please. I know no *restaurant* at Paris, except a very ignoble one, close by my lodging."

"*A propos*, where do you lodge?"

"Rue de l'Université, Numero * * *."

"A fine street, but *triste*. If you have no longer your family hotel, you have no excuse to linger in that museum of mummies, the Faubourg St. Germain; you must go into one of the new quarters by the Champs Elysées. Leave it to me; I'll find you a charming apartment. I know one to be had a bargain—a bagatelle—500 naps a-year. Cost you about two or three thousand more to furnish tolerably, not showily. Leave all to me. In three days you shall be settled. *A propos!* horses! You must have English ones. How many?—three for the saddle, two for your *coupé?* I'll find them for you. I will write to London to-morrow.. *Reese* (Rice) is your man."

"Spare yourself that trouble, my dear Frederic. I keep no horses and no *coupé*. I shall not change my apartment." As he said this, Rochebriant drew himself up somewhat haughtily.

"Faith," thought Lemercier, "is it possible that the Marquis is poor?" No. I have always heard that the Rochebriants were among the greatest proprietors in Bretagne. Most likely, with all his innocence of the Faubourg St. Germain, he knows enough of it to be aware that I, Frederic Lemercier, am not the man to patronize

one of its greatest nobles. *Sacre bleu!* if I thought that; if he meant to give himself airs to me, his old college friend—I would—I would call him out."

Just as M. Lemercier had come to that bellicose resolution, the Marquis said, with a smile which, though frank, was not without a certain grave melancholy in its expression, "My dear Frederic, pardon me if I seem to receive your friendly offers ungraciously, But believe that I have reasons you will approve for leading at Paris a life which you certainly will not envy;" then, evidently desirous to change the subject, he said in a livelier tone, "But what a marvellous city this Paris of ours is! Remember I had never seen it before: it burst on me like a city in the Arabian Nights two weeks ago. And that which strikes me most—I say it with regret and a pang of conscience—is certainly not the Paris of former times, but that Paris which M. Buonaparte—I beg pardon, which the Emperor—has called up around him, and identified for ever with his reign. It is what is new in Paris that strikes and enthrals me. Here I see the life of France, and I belong to her tombs!"

"I don't quite understand you," said Lemercier. "If you think that because your father and grandfather were Legitimists, you have not the fair field of living ambition open to you under the Empire, you never were more mistaken. *Moyen âge*, and even *rococo*, are all the rage. You have no idea how valuable your name would be either at the Imperial Court or in a Commercial Company. But with your fortune you are independent of all but fashion and the Jockey Club. And *à propos* of that, pardon me—what villain made your coat?—let me know; I will denounce him to the police."

Half amused, half amazed, Alain Marquis de Rochebriant looked at Frederic Lemercier much as a good-tempered lion may look upon a lively poodle who takes a liberty with his mane, and, after a pause, he replied curtly, "The clothes I wear at Paris were made at Bretagne; and if the name of Rochebriant be of any value at all in Paris, which I doubt, let me trust that it will make me acknowledged as *gentilhomme*, whatever my taste in a coat or whatever the doctrines of a club composed—of jockeys."

"Ha, ha!" cried Lemercier, freeing himself from the

arm of his friend, and laughing the more irresistibly as he encountered the grave look of the Marquis. "Pardon me —I can't help it—the Jockey Club—composed of jockeys! —it is too much;—the best joke. My dear Alain, there is some of the best blood of Europe in the Jockey Club; they would exclude a plain *bourgeois* like me. But it is all the same—in one respect you are quite right. Walk in a *blouse* if you please—you are still Rochebriant—you would only be called eccentric. Alas! I am obliged to send to London for my pantaloons; that comes of being a Lemercier. But here we are in the Palais Royal."

CHAPTER II.

THE *salons* of the Trois Frères were crowded—our friends found a table with some little difficulty. Lemercier proposed a private cabinet, which, for some reason known to himself, the Marquis declined.

Lemercier spontaneously and unrequested ordered the dinner and the wines.

While waiting for their oysters, with which, when in season, French *bon-vivants* usually commence their dinner, Lemercier looked round the *salon* with that air of inimitable, scrutinising, superb impertinence which distinguishes the Parisian dandy. Some of the ladies returned his glance coquettishly, for Lemercier was *beau garçon;* others turned aside indignantly, and muttered something to the gentlemen dining with them. The said gentlemen, when old, shook their heads, and continued to eat unmoved; when young, turned briskly round, and looked at first fiercely at M. Lemercier, but, encountering his eye through the glass which he had screwed into its socket—noticing the hardihood of his countenance and the squareness of his shoulders—even they turned back to the tables, shook their heads, and continued to eat unmoved, just like the old ones.

"Ah!" cried Lemercier, suddenly, here comes a man you should know, *mon cher*. He will tell you how to place your money—a rising man—a coming man—a future minister. Ah! *bon jour*, Duplessis, *bon jour*," kissing his hand to a gentleman who had just entered, and was looking about him for a seat. He was evidently well and favourably known at the Trois-Frères. The waiters had flocked round him, and were pointing to a table by the window, which a saturnine Englishman, who had dined off a beefsteak and potatoes, was about to vacate.

Mons. Duplessis, having first assured himself, like a prudent man, that his table was secure, having ordered his

oysters, his chablis, and his *potage à la bisque*, now paced calmly and slowly across the *salon*, and halted before Lemercier.

Here let me pause for a moment, and give the reader a rapid sketch of the two Parisians.

Frederic Lemercier is dressed, somewhat too showily, in the extreme of the prevalent fashion. He wears a superb pin in his cravat—a pin worth 2000 francs; he wears rings on his fingers, *breloques* to his watch-chain. He has a warm though dark complexion, thick black eyebrows, full lips, a nose somewhat turned up, but not small, very fine large dark eyes, a bold, open, somewhat impertinent expression of countenance—withal decidedly handsome, thanks to colouring, youth, and vivacity of "*regard*."

Lucien Duplessis, bending over the table, glancing first with curiosity at the Marquis de Rochebriant, who leans his cheek on his hand and seems not to notice him, then concentrating his attention on Frederic Lemercier, who sits square with his hands clasped—Lucien Duplessis is somewhere between forty and fifty, rather below the middle height, slender but not slight—what in English phrase is called "wiry." He is dressed with extreme simplicity: black frock-coat buttoned up; black cravat worn higher than men who follow the fashions wear their neckcloths now-a-days; a hawk's eye and a hawk's beak; hair of a dull brown, very short, and wholly without curl; his cheeks thin and smoothly shaven, but he wears a moustache and imperial, plagiarised from those of his sovereign, and, like all plagiarisms, carrying the borrowed beauty to extremes, so that the points of moustache and imperial, stiffened and sharpened by cosmetics which must have been composed of iron, looked like three long stings guarding lip and jaw from invasion; a pale olive-brown complexion; eyes small, deep-sunk, calm, piercing; his expression of face at first glance not striking, except for quiet immovability. Observed more heedfully, the expression was keenly intellectual—determined about the lips, calculating about the brows: altogether the face of no ordinary man, and one not, perhaps, without fine and high qualities, concealed from the general gaze by habitual reserve, but justifying the confidence of those whom he admitted into his intimacy.

"Ah, *mon cher*," said Lemercier, you promised to call on me yesterday at two o'clock. I waited in for you half an hour; you never came."

"No; I went first to the *Bourse*. The shares in that Company we spoke of have fallen; they will fall much lower—foolish to buy in yet; so the object of my calling on you was over. I took it for granted you would not wait if I failed my appointment. Do you go to the opera to-night?"

"I think not—nothing worth going for; besides, I have found an old friend, to whom I consecrate this evening. Let me introduce you to the Marquis de Rochebriant Alain, M. Duplessis."

The two gentlemen bowed.

"I had the honour to be known to Monsieur your father," said Duplessis.

"Indeed," returned Rochebriant. "He had not visited Paris for many years before he died."

"It was in London I met him, at the house of the Russian Princess C——."

The Marquis coloured high, inclined his head gravely, and made no reply. Here the waiter brought the oysters and the chablis, and Duplessis retired to his own table.

"That is the most extraordinary man," said Frederic, as he squeezed the lemon over his oysters, "and very much to be admired."

"How so? I see nothing at least to admire in his face," said the Marquis, with the bluntness of a provincial.

"His face. Ah! you are a Legitimist—party prejudice. He dresses his face after the Emperor; in itself a very clever face, surely."

"Perhaps, but not an amiable one. He looks like a bird of prey."

"All clever men are birds of prey. The eagles are the heroes, and the owls the sages. Duplessis is not an eagle nor an owl. I should rather call him a falcon, except that I would not attempt to hoodwink him."

"Call him what you will," said the Marquis, indifferently; "M. Duplessis can be nothing to me."

"I am not so sure of that," answered Frederic, somewhat nettled by the phlegm with which the Provincial regarded the pretensions of the Parisian. "Duplessis, I

repeat it, is an extraordinary man. Though untitled, he descends from your old aristocracy; in fact, I believe, as his name shows, from the same stem as the Richelieus. His father was a great scholar, and I believe he has read much himself. Might have distinguished himself in literature or at the bar, but his parents died fearfully poor; and some distant relations in commerce took charge of him, and devoted his talents to the *Bourse*. Seven years ago he lived in a single chamber, *au quatrième*, near the Luxembourg. He has now a hotel, not large but charming, in the Champs Elysées, worth at least 600,000 francs. Nor has he made his own fortune alone, but that of many others; some of birth as high as your own. He has the genius of riches, and knocks off a million as a poet does an ode, by the force of inspiration. He is hand-in-glove with the Ministers, and has been invited to Compiègne by the Emperor. You will find him very useful."

Alain made a slight movement of incredulous dissent, and changed the conversation to reminiscences of old school-boy days.

The dinner at length came to a close. Frederic rang for the bill—glanced over it. "Fifty-nine francs," said he, carelessly flinging down his napoleon and a half. The Marquis silently drew forth his purse and extracted the same sum.

When they were out of the *restaurant*, Frederic proposed adjourning to his own rooms. "I can promise you an excellent cigar, one of a box given to me by an invaluable young Spaniard attached to the Embassy here. Such cigars are not to be had at Paris for money, nor even for love, seeing that women, however devoted and generous, never offer you anything better than a cigarette. Such cigars are only to be had for friendship. Friendship is a jewel."

"I never smoke," answered the Marquis, "but I shall be charmed to come to your rooms; only don't let me encroach on your good-nature. Doubtless you have engagements for the evening."

"None till eleven o'clock, when I have promised to go to a *soirée* to which I do not offer to take you; for it is one of those Bohemian entertainments at which it would do you harm in the Faubourg to assist—at least until you

have made good your position. Let me see, is not the Duchesse de Tarascon a relation of yours?"

"Yes; my poor mother's first cousin."

"I congratulate you. *Très grande dame.* She will launch you *in puro cœlo*, as Juno might have launched one of her young peacocks."

"There has been no acquaintance between our houses," returned the Marquis, drily, "since the *mésalliance* of her second nuptials."

"*Mésalliance!* second nuptials! Her second husband was the Duc de Tarascon."

"A duke of the First Empire—the grandson of a butcher."

"*Diable!* you are a severe genealogist, Monsieur le Marquis. How can you consent to walk arm-in-arm with me, whose great-grandfather supplied bread to the same army to which the Duc de Tarascon's grandfather furnished the meat?"

"My dear Frederic, we two have an equal pedigree, for our friendship dates from the same hour. I do not blame the Duchesse de Tarascon for marrying the grandson of a butcher, but for marrying the son of a man made duke by an usurper. She abandoned the faith of her house and the cause of her sovereign. Therefore her marriage is a blot on our scutcheon."

Frederic raised his eyebrows, but had the tact to pursue the subject no further. He who interferes in the quarrels of relations must pass through life without a friend.

The young men now arrived at Lemercier's apartment, an *entresol* looking on the Boulevard des Italiens, consisting of more rooms than a bachelor generally requires; low-pitched, indeed, but of good dimensions, and decorated and furnished with a luxury which really astonished the provincial, though, with the high-bred pride of an oriental, he suppressed every sign of surprise.

Florentine cabinets freshly retouched by the exquisite skill of Mombro, costly specimens of old Sèvres and Limoges; pictures and bronzes and marble statuettes—all well chosen and of great price, reflected from mirrors in Venetian frames—made a *coup d'œil* very favourable to that respect which the human mind pays to the evidences of money. Nor was comfort less studied than splendour.

Thick carpets covered the floors, doubled and quilted *portières* excluded all draughts from chinks in the doors. Having allowed his friend a few minutes to contemplate and admire the *salle à manger* and *salon* which constituted his more state apartments, Frederic then conducted him into a small cabinet, fitted up with scarlet cloth and gold fringes, whereon were artistically arranged trophies of Eastern weapons and Turkish pipes with amber mouth-pieces.

There, placing the Marquis at ease on a divan and flinging himself on another, the Parisian exquisite ordered a valet, well dressed as himself, to bring coffee and liqueurs; and after vainly pressing one of his matchless cigars on his friend, indulged in his own Regalia.

"They are ten years old," said Frederic, with a tone of compassion at Alain's self-inflicted loss—"ten years old. Born therefore about the year in which we two parted——"

"When you were so hastily summoned from college," said the Marquis, "by the news of your father's illness. We expected you back in vain. Have you been at Paris ever since?"

"Ever since; my poor father died of that illness. His fortune proved much larger than was suspected—my share amounted to an income from investments in stocks, houses, &c., to upwards of 60,000 francs a-year; and as I wanted six years to my majority, of course the capital on attaining my majority would be increased by accumulation. My mother desired to keep me near her; my uncle, who was joint guardian with her, looked with disdain on our poor little provincial cottage; so promising an heir should acquire his finishing education under masters at Paris. Long before I was of age, I was initiated into politer mysteries of our capital than those celebrated by Eugene Sue. When I took possession of my fortune five years ago, I was considered a Crœsus; and really for that patriarchal time I was wealthy. Now, alas! my accumulations have vanished in my outfit; and 60,000 francs a-year is the least a Parisian can live upon. It is not only that all prices have fabulously increased, but that the dearer things become, the better people live. When I first came out, the world speculated upon me; now, in order to keep my standing, I am forced to speculate on the world.

Hitherto I have not lost; Duplessis let me into a few good things this year, worth 100,000 francs or so. Crœsus consulted the Delphic Oracle. Duplessis was not alive in the time of Crœsus, or Crœsus would have consulted Duplessis."

Here there was a ring at the outer door of the apartment, and in another minute the valet ushered in a gentleman somewhere about the age of thirty, of prepossessing countenance, and with the indefinable air of good-breeding and *usage du monde*. Frederic started up to greet cordially the new-comer, and introduced him to the Marquis under the name of "Sare Grarm Varn."

"Decidedly," said the visitor, as he took off his paletot and seated himself beside the Marquis—"decidedly, my dear Lemercier," said he, in very correct French, and with the true Parisian accent and intonation. "You Frenchmen merit that praise for polished ignorance of the language of barbarians which a distinguished historian bestows on the ancient Romans. Permit me, Marquis, to submit to you the consideration whether Grarm Varn is a fair rendering of my name as truthfully printed on this card."

The inscription on the card, thus drawn from its case and placed in Alain's hand, was—

MR. GRAHAM VANE,
No. — Rue d'Anjou.

The Marquis gazed at it as he might on a hieroglyphic, and passed it on to Lemercier in discreet silence.

That gentleman made another attempt at the barbarian appellation.

"'Grăr—hām Varne.' *C'est ça!* I triumph! all difficulties yield to French energy."

Here the coffee and liqueurs were served; and after a short pause the Englishman, who had very quietly been observing the silent Marquis, turned to him and said, "Monsieur le Marquis, I presume it was your father whom I remember as an acquaintance of my own father at Ems. It is many years ago; I was but a child. The Count de Chambord was then at that enervating little spa for the benefit of the Countess's health. If our friend Lemercier does not mangle your name as he does mine, I understand him to say that you are the Marquis de Rochebriant."

"That is my name: it pleases me to hear that my father was among those who flocked to Ems to do homage to the royal personage who deigns to assume the title of Count de Chambord."

"My own ancestors clung to the descendants of James II. till their claims were buried in the grave of the last Stuart; and I honour the gallant men who, like your father, revere in an exile the heir to their ancient kings."

The Englishman said this with grace and feeling; the Marquis's heart warmed to him at once.

"The first loyal *gentilhomme* I have met at Paris," thought the Legitimist; "and, oh, shame! not a Frenchman!"

Graham Vane, now stretching himself and accepting the cigar which Lemercier offered him, said to that gentleman: "You who know your Paris by heart—everybody and everything therein worth the knowing, with many bodies and many things that are not worth it—can you inform me who and what is a certain lady who every fine day may be seen walking in a quiet spot at the outskirts of the Bois de Boulogne, not far from the Baron de Rothschild's villa? The said lady arrives at this selected spot in a dark-blue *coupé* without armorial bearings, punctually at the hour of three. She wears always the same dress, a kind of grey pearl-coloured silk, with a *cachemire* shawl. In age she may be somewhat about twenty—a year or so more or less—and has a face as haunting as a Medusa's; not, however, a face to turn a man into a stone, but rather of the two turn a stone into a man. A clear paleness, with a bloom like an alabaster lamp with the light flashing through. I borrow that illustration from Sare Scott, who applied it to Milor Bee-ron."

"I have not seen the lady you describe," answered Lemercier, feeling humiliated by the avowal; "in fact, I have not been in that sequestred part of the Bois for months; but I will go to-morrow: three o'clock you say—leave it to me; to-morrow evening, if she is a Parisienne, you shall know all about her. But, *mon cher*, you are not of a jealous temperament to confide your discovery to another."

"Yes, I am of a very jealous temperament," replied the Englishman; "but jealousy comes after love, and not before

it. I am not in love; I am only haunted. To-morrow evening, then, shall we dine at Philippe's, seven o'clock."

"With all my heart," said Lemercier; "and you, too, Alain."

"Thank you, no," said the Marquis, briefly; and he rose, drew on his gloves, and took up his hat.

At these signals of departure, the Englishman, who did not want tact nor delicacy, thought that he had made himself *de trop* in the *tête-à-tête* of two friends of the same age and nation; and, catching up his paletot, said hastily, "No, Marquis, do not go yet, and leave our host in solitude; for I have an engagement which presses, and only looked in at Lemercier's for a moment, seeing the light at his windows. Permit me to hope that our acquaintance will not drop, and inform me where I may have the honour to call on you."

"Nay," said the Marquis; "I claim the right of a native to pay my respects first to the foreigner who visits our capital, and," he added in a lower tone, "who speaks so nobly of those who revere its exiles."

The Englishman saluted, and walked slowly towards the door; but on reaching the threshold turned back and made a sign to Lemercier, unperceived by Alain.

Frederic understood the sign, and followed Graham Vane into the adjoining room, closing the door as he passed.

"My dear Lemercier, of course I should not have intruded on you at this hour on a mere visit of ceremony. I called to say that the Mademoiselle Duval whose address you sent me is not the right one—not the lady whom, knowing your wide range of acquaintance, I asked you to aid me in finding out."

"Not the right Duval? *Diable!* she answered your description exactly."

"Not at all."

"You said she was very pretty and young — under twenty."

"You forgot that I said she deserved that description twenty-one years ago."

"Ah, so you did; but some ladies are always young. 'Age,' says a wit in the *Figaro*, 'is a river which the women compel to reascend to its source when it has flowed

onward more than twenty years.' Never mind—*soyez tranquille*—I will find your Duval yet if she is to be found. But why could not the friend who commissioned you to inquire choose a name less common? Duval! every street in Paris has a shop-door over which is inscribed the name of Duval."

"Quite true, there is the difficulty; however, my dear Lemercier, pray continue to look out for a Louise Duval who was young and pretty twenty-one years ago—this search ought to interest me more than that which I intrusted to you to-night, respecting the pearly-robed lady: for in the last I but gratify my own whim; in the first I discharge a promise to a friend. You, so perfect a Frenchman, know the difference; honour is engaged to the first. Be sure you let me know if you find any other Madame or Mademoiselle Duval; and of course you remember your promise not to mention to any one the commission of inquiry you so kindly undertake. I congratulate you on your friendship for M. de Rochebriant. What a noble countenance and manner!"

Lemercier returned to the Marquis. "Such a pity you can't dine with us to-morrow. I fear you made but a poor dinner to-day. But it is always better to arrange the *menu* beforehand. I will send to Philippe's to-morrow. Do not be afraid."

The Marquis paused a moment, and on his young face a proud struggle was visible. At last he said, bluntly and manfully—

"My dear Frederic, your world and mine are not and cannot be the same. Why should I be ashamed to own to my old schoolfellow that I am poor—very poor; that the dinner I have shared with you to-day is to me a criminal extravagance? I lodge in a single chamber on the fourth storey; I dine off a single *plat* at a small *restaurateur's;* the utmost income I can allow to myself does not exceed 5000 francs a-year: my fortunes I cannot hope much to improve. In his own country Alain de Rochebriant has no career."

Lemercier was so astonished by this confession that he remained for some moments silent, eyes and mouth both wide open; at length he sprang up, embraced his friend well-nigh sobbing, and exclaimed, "*Tant mieux pour moi!* You must take your lodging with me. I have a charming

bedroom to spare. Don't say no. It will raise my own position to say 'I and Rochebriant keep house together.' It must be so. Come here to-morrow. As for not having a career—bah! I and Duplessis will settle that. You shall be a *millionnaire* in two years. Meanwhile we will join capitals: I my paltry notes, you your grand name. Settled!"

"My dear, dear Frederic," said the young noble, deeply affected, "on reflection you will see what you propose is impossible. Poor I may be without dishonour; live at another man's cost I cannot do without baseness. It does not require to be *gentilhomme* to feel that: it is enough to be a Frenchman. Come and see me when you can spare the time. There is my address. You are the only man in Paris to whom I shall be at home. *Au revoir.*" And breaking away from Lemercier's clasp, the Marquis hurried off.

CHAPTER III.

ALAIN reached the house in which he lodged. Externally a fine house, it had been the hotel of a great family in the old *régime*. On the first floor were still superb apartments, with ceilings painted by Le Brun, with walls on which the thick silks still seemed fresh. These rooms were occupied by a rich *agent de change;* but, like all such ancient palaces, the upper storeys were wretchedly defective even in the comforts which poor men demand now-a-days: a back staircase, narrow, dirty, never lighted, dark as Erebus, led to the room occupied by the Marquis, which might be naturally occupied by a needy student or a virtuous *grisette*. But there was to him a charm in that old hotel, and the richest *locataire* therein was not treated with a respect so ceremonious as that which attended the lodger on the fourth storey. The porter and his wife were Bretons; they came from the village of Rochebriant; they had known Alain's parents in their young days; it was their kinsman who had recommended him to the hotel which they served: so, when he paused at the lodge for his key, which he had left there, the porter's wife was in waiting for his return, and insisted on lighting him upstairs and seeing to his fire, for after a warm day the night had turned to that sharp biting cold which is more trying in Paris than even in London.

The old woman, running up the stairs before him, opened the door of his room, and busied herself at the fire. "Gently, my good Marthe," said he, "that log suffices. I have been extravagant to-day, and must pinch for it."

"M. le Marquis jests," said the old woman, laughing.

"No, Marthe; I am serious. I have sinned, but I shall reform. *Entre nous*, my dear friend, Paris is very dear when one sets one's foot out of doors: I must soon go back to Rochebriant."

"When M. le Marquis goes back to Rochebriant he must

take with him a Madame la Marquise—some pretty angel with a suitable *dot*."

"A *dot* suitable to the ruins of Rochebriant would not suffice to repair them, Marthe: give me my dressing-gown, and good-night."

"*Bon repos, M. le Marquis! beaux rêves, et bel avenir.*"

"*Bel avenir!*" murmured the young man bitterly, leaning his cheek on his hand; "what fortune fairer than the present can be mine? yet inaction in youth is more keenly felt than in age. How lightly I should endure poverty if it brought poverty's ennobling companion, Labour—denied to me! Well, well; I must go back to the old rock: on this ocean there is no sail, not even an oar, for me."

Alain de Rochebriant had not been reared to the expectation of poverty. The only son of a father whose estates were large beyond those of most nobles in modern France, his destined heritage seemed not unsuitable to his illustrious birth. Educated at a provincial academy, he had been removed at the age of sixteen to Rochebriant, and lived there simply and lonelily enough, but still in a sort of feudal state, with an aunt, an elder and unmarried sister to his father.

His father he never saw but twice after leaving college. That brilliant *seigneur* visited France but rarely, for very brief intervals, residing wholly abroad. To him went all the revenues of Rochebriant save what sufficed for the *ménage* of his son and his sister. It was the cherished belief of these two loyal natures that the Marquis secretly devoted his fortune to the cause of the Bourbons—how, they knew not, though they often amused themselves by conjecturing; and the young man, as he grew up, nursed the hope that he should soon hear that the descendant of Henri Quatre had crossed the frontier on a white charger and hoisted the old gonfalon with its *fleur-de-lis*. Then, indeed, his own career would be opened, and the sword of the Kerouecs drawn from its sheath. Day after day he expected to hear of revolts, of which his noble father was doubtless the soul. But the Marquis, though a sincere Legitimist, was by no means an enthusiastic fanatic. He was simply a very proud, a very polished, a very luxurious, and, though not without the kindliness and generosity which were common attributes of the old French *noblesse*, a very selfish *grand seigneur*.

Losing his wife (who died the first year of marriage in giving birth to Alain) while he was yet very young, he had lived a frank libertine life until he fell submissive under the despotic yoke of a Russian Princess, who, for some mysterious reason, never visited her own country and obstinately refused to reside in France. She was fond of travel, and moved yearly from London to Naples, Naples to Vienna, Berlin, Madrid, Seville, Carlsbad, Baden-Baden —anywhere for caprice or change, except Paris. This fair wanderer succeeded in chaining to herself the heart and the steps of the Marquis de Rochebriant.

She was very rich; she lived semi-royally. Hers was just the house in which it suited the Marquis to be the *enfant gâté*. I suspect that, cat-like, his attachment was rather to the house than to the person of his mistress. Not that he was domiciled with the Princess; that would have been somewhat too much against the proprieties, greatly too much against the Marquis's notions of his own dignity. He had his own carriage, his own apartments, his own *suite*, as became so grand a *seigneur*, and the lover of so grand a *dame*. His estates, mortgaged before he came to them, yielded no income sufficient for his wants; he mortgaged deeper and deeper, year after year, till he could mortgage them no more. He sold his hotel at Paris —he accepted without scruple his sister's fortune—he borrowed with equal *sang froid* the two hundred thousand francs which his son on coming of age inherited from his mother. Alain yielded that fortune to him without a murmur—nay, with pride; he thought it destined to go towards raising a regiment for the *fleur-de-lis*.

To do the Marquis justice, he was fully persuaded that he should shortly restore to his sister and son what he so recklessly took from them. He was engaged to be married to his Princess so soon as her own husband died. She had been separated from the Prince for many years, and every year it was said he could not last a year longer. But he completed the measure of his conjugal iniquities by continuing to live; and one day, by mistake, Death robbed the lady of the Marquis instead of the Prince.

This was an accident which the Marquis had never counted upon. He was still young enough to consider himself young; in fact, one principal reason for keeping

Alain secluded in Bretagne was his reluctance to introduce into the world a son "as old as myself" he would say pathetically. The news of his death, which happened at Baden after a short attack of bronchitis caught in a supper *al fresco* at the old castle, was duly transmitted to Rochebriant by the Princess; and the shock to Alain and his aunt was the greater because they had seen so little of the departed that they regarded him as a heroic myth, an impersonation of ancient chivalry, condemning himself to voluntary exile rather than do homage to usurpers. But from their grief they were soon roused by the terrible doubt whether Rochebriant could still be retained in the family. Besides the mortgagees, creditors from half the capitals in Europe sent in their claims; and all the movable effects transmitted to Alain by his father's confidential Italian valet, except sundry carriages and horses which were sold at Baden for what they would fetch, were a magnificent dressing-case, in the secret drawer of which were some bank-notes amounting to thirty thousand francs, and three large boxes containing the Marquis's correspondence, a few miniature female portraits, and a great many locks of hair.

Wholly unprepared for the ruin that stared him in the face, the young Marquis evinced the natural strength of his character by the calmness with which he met the danger, and the intelligence with which he calculated and reduced it.

By the help of the family notary in the neighbouring town, he made himself master of his liabilities and his means; and he found that, after paying all debts and providing for the interest of the mortgages, a property which ought to have realised a rental of £10,000 a-year, yielded not more than £400. Nor was even this margin safe, nor the property out of peril; for the principal mortgagee, who was a capitalist in Paris named Louvier, having had during the life of the late Marquis more than once to wait for his half-yearly interest longer than suited his patience —and his patience was not enduring—plainly declared that if the same delay recurred he should put his right of seizure in force; and in France still more than in England, bad seasons seriously affect the security of rents. To pay away £9600 a-year regularly out of £10,000, with the

penalty of forfeiting the whole if not paid, whether crops may fail, farmers procrastinate, and timber fall in price, is to live with the sword of Damocles over one's head.

For two years and more, however, Alain met his difficulties with prudence and vigour; he retrenched the establishment hitherto kept at the chateau, resigned such rural pleasures as he had been accustomed to indulge, and lived like one of his petty farmers. But the risks of the future remained undiminished.

"There is but one way, Monsieur le Marquis," said the family notary, M. Hébert, "by which you can put your estate in comparative safety. Your father raised his mortgages from time to time, as he wanted money, and often at interest above the average market interest. You may add considerably to your income by consolidating all these mortgages into one at a lower percentage, and in so doing pay off this formidable mortgagee, M. Louvier, who, I shrewdly suspect, is bent upon becoming the proprietor of Rochebriant. Unfortunately those few portions of your land which were but lightly charged, and, lying contiguous to small proprietors, were coveted by them, and could be advantageously sold, are already gone to pay the debts of Monsieur the late Marquis. There are, however, two small farms which, bordering close on the town of S——, I think I could dispose of for building purposes at high rates; but these lands are covered by Monsieur Louvier's general mortgage, and he has refused to release them, unless the whole debt be paid. Were that debt therefore transferred to another mortgagee, we might stipulate for their exception, and in so doing secure a sum of more than 100,000 francs, which you could keep in reserve for a pressing or unforeseen occasion, and make the nucleus of a capital devoted to the gradual liquidation of the charges on the estate. For with a little capital, Monsieur le Marquis, your rent-roll might be very greatly increased, the forests and orchards improved, those meadows round S—— drained and irrigated. Agriculture is beginning to be understood in Bretagne, and your estate would soon double its value in the hands of a spirited capitalist. My advice to you therefore, is to go to Paris, employ a good *avoué*, practised in such branch of his profession, to negotiate the consolidation of your mortgages upon terms that will enable you

to sell outlying portions, and so pay off the charge by instalments agreed upon;—to see if some safe company or rich individual can be found to undertake for a term of years the management of your forests, the draining of the S—— meadows, the superintendence of your fisheries, &c. They, it is true, will monopolise the profits for many years —perhaps twenty; but you are a young man; at the end of that time you will re-enter on your estate with a rental so improved that the mortgages, now so awful, will seem to you comparatively trivial."

In pursuance of this advice, the young Marquis had come to Paris fortified with a letter from M. Hébert to an *avoué* of eminence, and with many letters from his aunt to the nobles of the Faubourg connected with his house. Now one reason why M. Hébert had urged his client to undertake this important business in person, rather than volunteer his own services in Paris, was somewhat extra-professional. He had a sincere and profound affection for Alain; he felt compassion for that young life so barrenly wasted in seclusion and severe privations; he respected, but was too practical a man of business to share, those chivalrous sentiments of loyalty to an exiled dynasty which disqualified the man for the age he lived in, and, if not greatly modified, would cut him off from the hopes and aspirations of his eager generation. He thought plausibly enough that the air of the grand metropolis was necessary to the mental health, enfeebled and withering amidst the feudal mists of Bretagne; that once in Paris, Alain would imbibe the ideas of Paris, adapt himself to some career leading to honour and to fortune, for which he took facilities from his high birth, an historical name too national for any dynasty not to welcome among its adherents, and an intellect not yet sharpened by contact and competition with others, but in itself vigorous, habituated to thought, and vivified by the noble aspirations which belong to imaginative natures.

At the least, Alain would be at Paris in the social position which would afford him the opportunities of a marriage, in which his birth and rank would be readily accepted as an equivalent to some ample fortune that would serve to redeem the endangered *seigneuries*. He therefore warned Alain that the affair for which he went

to Paris might be tedious, that lawyers were always slow, and advised him to calculate on remaining several months, perhaps a year; delicately suggesting that his rearing hitherto had been too secluded for his age and rank, and that a year at Paris, even if he failed in the object which took him there, would not be thrown away in the knowledge of men and things that would fit him better to grapple with his difficulties on his return.

Alain divided his spare income between his aunt and himself, and had come to Paris resolutely determined to live within the £200 a-year which remained to his share. He felt the revolution in his whole being that commenced when out of sight of the petty principality in which he was the object of that feudal reverence, still surviving in the more unfrequented parts of Bretagne; for the representatives of illustrious names connected with the immemorial legends of the province.

The very bustle of a railway, with its crowd and quickness and unceremonious democracy of travel, served to pain and confound and humiliate that sense of individual dignity in which he had been nurtured. He felt that, once away from Rochebriant, he was but a cipher in the sum of human beings. Arrived at Paris, and reaching the gloomy hotel to which he had been recommended, he greeted even the desolation of that solitude which is usually so oppressive to a stranger in the metropolis of his native land. Loneliness was better than the loss of self in the reek and pressure of an unfamiliar throng. For the first few days he had wandered over Paris without calling even on the *avoué* to whom M. Hébert had directed him. He felt with the instinctive acuteness of a mind which, under sounder training, would have achieved no mean distinction, that it was a safe precaution to imbue himself with the atmosphere of the place, and seize on those general ideas which in great capitals are so contagious that they are often more accurately caught by the first impressions than by subsequent habit, before he brought his mind into collision with those of the individuals he had practically to deal with.

At last he repaired to the *avoué*, M. Gandrin, Rue St. Florentin. He had mechanically formed his idea of the abode and person of an *avoué* from his association with

M. Hébert. He expected to find a dull house in a dull street near the centre of business, remote from the haunts of idlers, and a grave man of unpretending exterior and matured years.

He arrived at a hotel newly fronted, richly decorated, in the fashionable *quartier* close by the Tuileries. He entered a wide *porte cochère*, and was directed by the *concierge* to mount *au premier*. There, first detained in an office faultlessly neat, with spruce young men at smart desks, he was at length admitted into a noble *salon*, and into the presence of a gentleman lounging in an easy-chair before a magnificent bureau of *marqueterie*, *genre Louis Seize*, engaged in patting a white curly lapdog, with a pointed nose and a shrill bark.

The gentleman rose politely on his entrance, and released the dog, who, after sniffing the Marquis, condescended not to bite.

"Monsieur le Marquis," said M. Gandrin, glancing at the card and the introductory note from M. Hébert, which Alain had sent in, and which lay on the *secrétaire* beside heaps of letters nicely arranged and labelled, "charmed to make the honour of your acquaintance; just arrived at Paris? So M. Hébert—a very worthy person whom I have never seen, but with whom I have had correspondence—tells me you wish for my advice; in fact, he wrote to me some days ago, mentioning the business in question—consolidation of mortgages. A very large sum wanted, Monsieur le Marquis, and not to be had easily."

"Nevertheless," said Alain, quietly, "I should imagine that there must be many capitalists in Paris willing to invest in good securities at fair interest."

"You are mistaken, Marquis; very few such capitalists. Men worth money nowadays like quick returns and large profits, thanks to the magnificent system of *Crédit Mobilier*, in which, as you are aware, a man may place his money in any trade or speculation without liabilities beyond his share. Capitalists are nearly all traders or speculators."

"Then," said the Marquis, half rising, "I am to presume, sir, that you are not likely to assist me."

"No, I don't say that, Marquis. I will look with care into the matter. Doubtless you have with you an abstract of the necessary documents, the conditions of the present

mortgages, the rental of the estate, its probable prospects, and so forth."

"Sir, I have such an abstract with me at Paris; and having gone into it myself with M. Hébert, I can pledge you my word that it is strictly faithful to the facts."

The Marquis said this with *naïve* simplicity, as if his word were quite sufficient to set that part of the question at rest.

M. Gandrin smiled politely and said, "*Eh bien*, M. le Marquis: favour me with the abstract; in a week's time you shall have my opinion. You enjoy Paris? Greatly improved under the Emperor. *A propos*, Madame Gandrin receives to-morrow evening; allow me that opportunity to present you to her."

Unprepared for the proffered hospitality, the Marquis had no option but to murmur his gratification and assent.

In a minute more he was in the streets. The next evening he went to Madame Gandrin's—a brilliant reception—a whole moving flower-bed of 'decorations' there. Having gone through the ceremony of presentation to Madame Gandrin—a handsome woman dressed to perfection, and conversing with the secretary to an embassy—the young noble ensconced himself in an obscure and quiet corner, observing all, and imagining that he escaped observation. And as the young men of his own years glided by him, or as their talk reached his ears, he became aware that from top to toe, within and without, he was old-fashioned, obsolete, not of his race, not of his day. His rank itself seemed to him a waste-paper title-deed to a heritage long lapsed. Not thus the princely *seigneurs* of Rochebriant made their *début* at the capital of their nation. They had had the *entrée* to the cabinets of their kings; they had glittered in the halls of Versailles; they had held high posts of distinction in court and camp; the great Order of St. Louis had seemed their hereditary appanage. His father, though a voluntary exile in manhood, had been in childhood a king's page, and throughout life remained the associate of princes; and here, in an *avoué's soirée*, unknown, unregarded, an expectant on an *avoué's* patronage, stood the last lord of Rochebriant.

It is easy to conceive that Alain did not stay long. But he stayed long enough to convince him that on £200

a-year the polite society of Paris, even as seen at M. Gandrin's, was not for him. Nevertheless, a day or two after, he resolved to call upon the nearest of his kinsmen to whom his aunt had given him letters. With the Count de Vandemar, one of his fellow-nobles of the sacred Faubourg, he should be no less Rochebriant, whether in a garret or a palace. The Vandemars, in fact, though for many generations before the First Revolution a puissant and brilliant family, had always recognised the Rochebriants as the head of their house—the trunk from which they had been slipped in the fifteenth century, when a younger son of the Rochebriants married a wealthy heiress and took the title, with the lands, of Vandemar.

Since then the two families had often intermarried. The present count had a reputation for ability, was himself a large proprietor, and might furnish advice to guide Alain in his negotiations with M. Gandrin. The Hotel de Vandemar stood facing the old Hotel de Rochebriant; it was less spacious, but not less venerable, gloomy, and prison-like.

As he turned his eyes from the armorial scutcheon which still rested, though chipped and mouldering, over the portals of his lost ancestral house, and was about to cross the street, two young men, who seemed two or three years older than himself, emerged on horseback from the Hotel de Vandemar.

Handsome young men, with the lofty look of the old race, dressed with the punctilious care of person which is not foppery in men of birth, but seems part of the self-respect that appertains to the old chivalric point of honour. The horse of one of these cavaliers made a caracole which brought it nearly upon Alain as he was about to cross. The rider, checking his steed, lifted his hat to Alain and uttered a word of apology in the courtesy of ancient high-breeding, but still with condescension as to an inferior. This little incident, and the slighting kind of notice received from coevals of his own birth, and doubtless his own blood—for he divined truly that they were the sons of the Count de Vandemar—disconcerted Alain to a degree which perhaps a Frenchman alone can comprehend. He had even half a mind to give up his visit and turn back. However, his native manhood prevailed over that morbid

sensitiveness which, born out of the union of pride and poverty, has all the effects of vanity, and yet is not vanity itself.

The Count was at home, a thin spare man with a narrow but high forehead, and an expression of countenance keen, severe, and *un peu moqueuse*.

He received the Marquis, however, at first with great cordiality, kissed him on both sides of his cheek, called him "cousin," expressed immeasurable regret that the Countess was gone out on one of the missions of charity in which the great ladies of the Faubourg religiously interest themselves, and that his sons had just ridden forth to the Bois.

As Alain, however, proceeded, simply and without false shame, to communicate the object of his visit at Paris, the extent of his liabilities, and the penury of his means, the smile vanished from the Count's face; he somewhat drew back his *fauteuil* in the movement common to men who wish to estrange themselves from some other man's difficulties; and when Alain came to a close, the Count remained some moments seized with a slight cough; and, gazing intently on the carpet, at length he said, "My dear young friend, your father behaved extremely ill to you—dishonourably, fraudulently."

"Hold!" said the Marquis, colouring high. "Those are words no man can apply to my father in my presence."

The Count stared, shrugged his shoulders, and replied with *sang froid*—

"Marquis, if you are contented with your father's conduct, of course it is no business of mine: he never injured me. I presume, however, that, considering my years and my character, you come to me for advice—is it so?"

Alain bowed his head in assent.

"There are four courses for one in your position to take," said the Count, placing the index of the right hand successively on the thumb and three fingers of the left—"four courses, and no more.

"1st. To do as your notary recommended: consolidate your mortgages, patch up your income as you best can, return to Rochebriant, and devote the rest of your existence to the preservation of your property. By that course

your life will be one of permanent privation, severe struggle; and the probability is that you will not succeed: there will come one or two bad seasons, the farmers will fail to pay, the mortgagee will foreclose, and you may find yourself, after twenty years of anxiety and torment, prematurely old and without a *sou*.

"Course the 2d. Rochebriant, though so heavily encumbered as to yield you some such income as your father gave to his *chef de cuisine*, is still one of those superb *terres* which bankers and Jews and stock-jobbers court and hunt after, for which they will give enormous sums. If you place it in good hands, I do not doubt that you could dispose of the property within three months, on terms that would leave you a considerable surplus, which, invested with judgment, would afford you whereon you could live at Paris in a way suitable to your rank and age.—Need we go further?—does this course smile to you?"

"Pass on, Count; I will defend to the last what I take from my ancestors, and cannot voluntarily sell their roof-tree and their tombs."

"Your name would still remain, and you would be just as well received in Paris, and your *noblesse* just as implicitly conceded, if all Judæa encamped upon Rochebriant. Consider how few of us *gentilshommes* of the old *régime* have any domains left to us. Our names alone survive; no revolution can efface *them*."

"It may be so, but pardon me; there are subjects on which we cannot reason—we can but feel. Rochebriant may be torn from me, but I cannot yield it."

"I proceed to the third course. Keep the *château* and give up its traditions; remain *de facto* Marquis of Rochebriant, but accept the new order of things. Make yourself known to the people in power. They will be charmed to welcome you;—a convert from the old *noblesse* is a guarantee of stability to the new system. You will be placed in diplomacy; effloresce into an ambassador, a minister—and ministers nowadays have opportunities to become enormously rich."

"That course is not less impossible than the last. Till Henry V. formally resign his right to the throne of St. Louis, I can be servant to no other man seated on that throne."

"Such, too, is my creed," said the Count, "and I cling to it; but my estate is not mortgaged, and I have neither the tastes nor the age for public employments. The last course is perhaps better than the rest; at all events it is the easiest. A wealthy marriage; even if it must be a *mésalliance*. I think at your age, with your appearance, that your name is worth at least two million francs in the eyes of a rich *roturier* with an ambitious daughter."

"Alas!" said the young man, rising, "I see I shall have to go back to Rochebriant. I cannot sell my castle, I cannot sell my creed, and I cannot sell my name and myself."

"The last all of us did in the old *régime*, Marquis. Though I still retain the title of Vandemar, my property comes from the Farmer-General's daughter, whom my great-grandfather, happily for us, married in the days of Louis Quinze. Marriages with people of sense and rank have always been *mariages de convenance* in France. It is only in *le petit monde* that men having nothing marry girls having nothing, and I don't believe they are a bit the happier for it. On the contrary, the quarrels *de ménage* leading to frightful crimes appear by the '*Gazette des Tribunaux*' to be chiefly found among those who do not sell themselves at the altar."

The old Count said this with a grim *persiflage*. He was a Voltairian.

Voltairianism deserted by the modern Liberals of France has its chief cultivation nowadays among the wits of the old *régime*. They pick up its light weapons on the battle-field on which their fathers perished, and re-feather against the *canaille* the shafts which had been pointed against the *noblesse*.

"Adieu, Count," said Alain, rising; "I do not thank you less for your advice because I have not the wit to profit by it."

"*Au revoir*, my cousin; you will think better of it when you have been a month or two at Paris. By the way, my wife receives every Wednesday; consider our house yours."

"Count, can I enter into the world which Madame la Comtesse receives, in the way that becomes my birth, on the income I take from my fortune?"

The Count hesitated. "No," said he at last, frankly; "not because you will be less welcome or less respected, but because I see that you have all the pride and sensitiveness of a *seigneur de province*. Society would therefore give you pain, not pleasure. More than this, I know by the remembrance of my own youth, and the sad experience of my own sons, that you would be irresistibly led into debt, and debt in your circumstances would be the loss of Rochebriant. No; I invite you to visit us. I offer you the most select but not the most brilliant circles of Paris, because my wife is religious, and frightens away the birds of gay plumage with the scarecrows of priests and bishops. But if you accept my invitation and my offer, I am bound, as an old man of the world to a young kinsman, to say that the chances are that you will be ruined."

"I thank you, Count, for your candour; and I now acknowledge that I have found a relation and a guide," answered the Marquis, with a nobility of mien that was not without a pathos which touched the hard heart of the old man.

"Come at least whenever you want a sincere if a rude friend;" and though he did not kiss his cousin's cheek this time, he gave him, with more sincerity, a parting shake of the hand.

And these made the principal events in Alain's Paris life till he met Frederic Lemercier. Hitherto he had received no definite answer from M. Gandrin, who had postponed an interview, not having had leisure to make himself master of all the details in the abstract sent to him.

CHAPTER IV.

THE next day, towards the afternoon, Frederic Lemercier, somewhat breathless from the rapidity at which he had ascended to so high an eminence, burst into Alain's chamber.

"*Pr-r-r! mon cher;* what superb exercise for the health—how it must strengthen the muscles and expand the chest! after this, who should shrink from scaling Mont Blanc? —Well, well. I have been meditating on your business ever since we parted. But I would fain know more of its details. You shall confide them to me as we drive through the Bois. My *coupé* is below, and the day is beautiful—come."

To the young Marquis, the gaiety, the heartiness of his college friend were a cordial. How different from the dry counsels of the Count de Vandemar! Hope, though vaguely, entered into his heart. Willingly he accepted Frederic's invitation, and the young men were soon rapidly borne along the Champs Elysées. As briefly as he could Alain described the state of his affairs, the nature of his mortgages, and the result of his interview with M. Gandrin.

Frederic listened attentively. "Then Gandrin has given you as yet no answer?"

"None; but I have a note from him this morning asking me to call to-morrow."

"After you have seen him, decide on nothing—if he makes you any offer. Get back your abstract, or a copy of it, and confide it to me. Gandrin ought to help you; he transacts affairs in a large way. *Belle clientèle* among the *millionnaires*. But his clients expect fabulous profits, and so does he. As for your principal mortgagee, Louvier, you know, of course, who he is."

"No, except that M. Hébert told me that he was very rich."

"Rich! I should think so; one of the Kings of Finance. Ah! observe those young men on horseback."

Alain looked forth and recognised the two cavaliers whom he had conjectured to be the sons of the Count de Vandemar.

"Those *beaux garçons* are fair specimens of your Faubourg," said Frederic; "they would decline my acquaintance because my grandfather kept a shop, and they keep a shop between them."

"A shop! I am mistaken, then. Who are they?"

"Raoul and Enguerrand, sons of that mocker of man, the Count de Vandemar."

"And they keep a shop! you are jesting."

"A shop at which you may buy gloves and perfumes, Rue de la Chaussée d'Antin. Of course they don't serve at the counter; they only invest their pocket-money in the speculation, and in so doing—treble at least their pocket-money, buy their horses, and keep their grooms."

"Is it possible! nobles of such birth! How shocked the Count would be if he knew it!"

"Yes, very much shocked if he was supposed to know it. But he is too wise a father not to give his sons limited allowances and unlimited liberty, especially the liberty to add to the allowances as they please. Look again at them; no better riders and more affectionate brothers since the date of Castor and Pollux. Their tastes indeed differ: Raoul is religious and moral, melancholy and dignified; Enguerrand is a lion of the first water,—*élégant* to the tips of his nails. These demigods are nevertheless very mild to mortals. Though Enguerrand is the best pistol-shot in Paris, and Raoul the best fencer, the first is so good-tempered that you would be a brute to quarrel with him, the last so true a Catholic, that if you quarrelled with him you need fear not his sword. He would not die in the committal of what the Church holds a mortal sin."

"Are you speaking ironically? Do you mean to imply that men of the name of Vandemar are not brave?"

"On the contrary, I believe that, though masters of their weapons, they are too brave to abuse their skill; and I must add, that though they are sleeping partners in a shop, they would not cheat you of a farthing.—Benign stars on earth, as Castor and Pollux were in heaven."

"But partners in a shop!"

"Bah! when a minister himself, like the late M. de M——, kept a shop, and added the profits of *bon bons* to his revenue, you may form some idea of the spirit of the age. If young nobles are not generally sleeping partners in shops, still they are more or less adventurers in commerce. The *Bourse* is the profession of those who have no other profession. You have visited the *Bourse?*"

"No."

"No! this is just the hour. We have time yet for the Bois.—Coachman, drive to the *Bourse.*"

"The fact is," resumed Frederic, "that gambling is one of the wants of civilised men. The *rouge-et-noir* and *roulette* tables are forbidden—the hells closed; but the passion for making money without working for it must have its vent, and that vent is the *Bourse.* As instead of a hundred wax-lights you now have one jet of gas, so instead of a hundred hells you have now one *Bourse*, and—it is exceedingly convenient; always at hand; no discredit being seen there as it was to be seen at Frascati's,—on the contrary, at once respectable, and yet the *mode.*"

The *coupé* stops at the *Bourse*, our friends mount the steps, glide through the pillars, deposit their canes at a place destined to guard them, and the Marquis follows Frederic up a flight of stairs till he gains the open gallery round a vast hall below. Such a din! such a clamour! disputations, wrangling, wrathful.

Here Lemercier distinguished some friends, whom he joined for a few minutes.

Alain, left alone, looked down into the hall. He thought himself in some stormy scene of the First Revolution. An English contested election in the market-place of a borough when the candidates are running close on each other, the result doubtful, passions excited, the whole borough in civil war, is peaceful compared to the scene at the *Bourse.*

Bulls and bears screaming, bawling, gesticulating, as if one were about to strangle the other; the whole, to an uninitiated eye, a confusion, a Babel, which it seems absolutely impossible to reconcile to the notion of quiet mercantile transactions, the purchase and sale of shares and stocks. As Alain gazed bewildered, he felt himself gently touched, and, looking round, saw the Englishman.

"A lively scene!" whispered Mr. Vane. "This is the heart of Paris: it beats very loudly."

"Is your *Bourse* in London like this?"

"I cannot tell you; at our Exchange the general public are not admitted; the privileged priests of that temple sacrifice their victims in closed penetralia, beyond which the sounds made in the operation do not travel to ears profane. But had we an Exchange like this open to all the world, and placed, not in a region of our metropolis unknown to fashion, but in some elegant square in St. James's or at Hyde Park Corner, I suspect that our national character would soon undergo a great change, and that all our idlers and sporting-men would make their books there every day, instead of waiting long months in *ennui* for the Doncaster and the Derby. At present we have but few men on the turf; we should then have few men not on Exchange, especially if we adopt your law, and can contrive to be traders without risk of becoming bankrupts. Napoleon I. called us a shopkeeping nation. Napoleon III. has taught France to excel us in everything, and certainly he has made Paris a shopkeeping city."

Alain thought of Raoul and Enguerrand, and blushed to find that what he considered a blot on his countrymen was so familiarly perceptible to a foreigner's eye.

"And the Emperor has done wisely, at least for the time," continued the Englishman, with a more thoughtful accent. "He has found vent thus for that very dangerous class in Paris society to which the subdivision of property gave birth—viz., the crowd of well-born, daring young men without fortune and without profession. He has opened the *Bourse* and said, 'There, I give you employment, resource, an *avenir*.' He has cleared the byways into commerce and trade, and opened new avenues of wealth to the *noblesse*, whom the great Revolution so unwisely beggared. What other way to rebuild a *noblesse* in France, and give it a chance of power because an access to fortune? But to how many sides of your national character has the *Bourse* of Paris magnetic attraction! You Frenchmen are so brave that you could not be happy without facing danger, so covetous of distinction that you would pine yourselves away without a dash, *coûte que coûte*, at celebrity and a red ribbon. Danger! look below at that

arena—there it is; danger daily, hourly. But there also is celebrity; win at the *Bourse*, as of old in a tournament, and paladins smile on you, and ladies give you their scarves, or, what is much the same, they allow you to buy their *cachemires*. Win at the *Bourse*—what follows? the Chamber, the Senate, the Cross, the Minister's *portefeuille*. I might rejoice in all this for the sake of Europe—could it last, and did it not bring the consequences that follow the demoralisation which attends it. The *Bourse* and the *Crédit Mobilier* keep Paris quiet—at least as quiet as it can be. These are the secrets of this reign of splendour; these the two *lions couchants* on which rests the throne of the Imperial reconstructor."

Alain listened surprised and struck. He had not given the Englishman credit for the cast of mind which such reflections evinced.

Here Lemercier rejoined them, and shook hands with Graham Vane, who, taking him aside, said, "But you promised to go to the Bois, and indulge my insane curiosity about the lady in the pearl-coloured robe?"

"I have not forgotten; it is not half-past two yet; you said three. *Soyez tranquille;* I drive thither from the *Bourse* with Rochebriant."

"Is it necessary to take with you that very good-looking Marquis?"

"I thought you said you were not jealous, because not yet in love. However, if Rochebriant occasions you the pang which your humble servant failed to inflict, I will take care that he do not see the lady."

"No," said the Englishman; "on consideration, I should be very much obliged to any one with whom she would fall in love. That would disenchant me. Take the Marquis by all means."

Meanwhile Alain, again looking down, saw just under him, close by one of the pillars, Lucien Duplessis. He was standing apart from the throng—a small space cleared round himself—and two men who had the air of gentlemen of the *beau monde*, with whom he was conferring. Duplessis, thus seen, was not like the Duplessis at the *restaurant*. It would be difficult to explain what the change was, but it forcibly struck Alain: the air was more dignified, the expression keener; there was a look of conscious power and

command about the man even at that distance; the intense, concentrated intelligence of his eye, his firm lip, his marked features, his projecting, massive brow,—would have impressed a very ordinary observer. In fact, the man was here in his native element—in the field in which his intellect gloried, commanded, and had signalised itself by successive triumphs. Just thus may be the change in the great orator whom you deemed insignificant in a drawing-room, when you see his crest rise above a reverential audience; or the great soldier, who was not distinguishable from the subaltern in a peaceful club, could you see him issuing the order to his aides-de-camp amidst the smoke and roar of the battle-field.

"Ah, Marquis!" said Graham Vane, "are you gazing at Duplessis? He is the modern genius of Paris. He is at once the Cousin, the Guizot, and the Victor Hugo of speculation. Philosophy — Eloquence — audacious Romance;—all Literature now is swallowed up in the sublime epic of *Agiotage*, and Duplessis is the poet of the Empire."

"Well said, M. Grarm Varn," cried Frederic, forgetting his recent lesson in English names. "Alain underrates that great man. How could an Englishman appreciate him so well."

"*Ma foi!*" returned Graham, quietly: "I am studying to think at Paris, in order some day or other to know how to act in London. Time for the Bois. Lemercier, we meet at seven—Philippe's."

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CHAPTER V.

"WHAT do you think of the *Bourse?*" asked Lemercier, as their carriage took the way to the Bois.

"I cannot think of it yet; I am stunned. It seems to me as if I had been at a *Sabbat*, of which the wizards were *agents de change*, but not less bent upon raising Satan."

"Pooh! the best way to exorcise Satan is to get rich enough not to be tempted by him. The fiend always loved to haunt empty places; and of all places nowadays he prefers empty purses and empty stomachs."

"But do all people get rich at the *Bourse?* or is not one man's wealth many men's ruin?"

"That is a question not very easy to answer; but under our present system Paris gets rich, though at the expense of individual Parisians. I will try and explain. The average luxury is enormously increased even in my experience; what were once considered refinement and fopperies are now called necessary comforts. Prices are risen enormously,—house-rent doubled within the last five or six years; all articles of luxury are very much dearer; the very gloves I wear cost twenty per cent. more than I used to pay for gloves of the same quality. How the people we meet live, and live so well, is an enigma that would defy Œdipus if Œdipus were not a Parisian. But the main explanation is this: speculation and commerce, with the facilities given to all investments, have really opened more numerous and more rapid ways to fortune than were known a few years ago.

Crowds are thus attracted to Paris, resolved to venture a small capital in the hope of a large one; they live on that capital, not on their income, as gamesters do. There is an idea among us that it is necessary to seem rich in order to become rich. Thus there is a general extravagance and profusion. English *milords* marvel at our splendour. Those who, while spending their capital as their income,

fail in their schemes of fortune, after one, two, three, or four years—vanish. What becomes of them, I know no more than I do what becomes of the old moons. Their place is immediately supplied by new candidates. Paris is thus kept perennially sumptuous and splendid by the gold it engulfs. But then some men succeed—succeed prodigiously, preternaturally; they make colossal fortunes, which are magnificently expended. They set an example of show and pomp, which is of course the more contagious because so many men say, 'The other day those *millionnaires* were as poor as we are; they never economised; why should we?' Paris is thus doubly enriched—by the fortunes it swallows up, and by the fortunes it casts up; the last being always reproductive, and the first never lost except to the individuals."

"I understand: but what struck me forcibly at the scene we have left was the number of young men there; young men whom I should judge by their appearance to be gentlemen, evidently not mere spectators—eager, anxious, with tablets in their hands. That old or middle-aged men should find a zest in the pursuit of gain I can understand, but youth and avarice seem to me a new combination, which Molière never divined in his '*Avare*.'"

"Young men, especially if young gentlemen, love pleasure; and pleasure in this city is very dear. This explains why so many young men frequent the *Bourse*. In the old gaming-tables now suppressed, young men were the majority; in the days of your chivalrous forefathers it was the young nobles, not the old, who would stake their very mantles and swords on a cast of the die. And, naturally enough, *mon cher;* for is not youth the season of hope, and is not hope the goddess of gaming, whether at *rouge et noir* or the *Bourse?*"

Alain felt himself more and more behind his generation. The acute reasoning of Lemercier humbled his *amour propre*. At college Lemercier was never considered Alain's equal in ability or book-learning. What a stride beyond his schoolfellow had Lemercier now made! How dull and stupid the young provincial felt himself to be as compared with the easy cleverness and half-sportive philosophy of the Parisian's fluent talk!

He sighed with a melancholy and yet with a generous

envy. He had too fine a natural perception not to acknowledge that there is a rank of mind as well as of birth, and in the first he felt that Lemercier might well walk before a Rochebriant; but his very humility was a proof that he underrated himself.

Lemercier did not excel him in mind, but in experience. And just as the drilled soldier seems a much finer fellow than the raw recruit, because he knows how to carry himself, but after a year's discipline the raw recruit may excel in martial air the upright hero whom he now despairingly admires, and never dreams he can rival; so set a mind from a village into the drill of a capital, and see it a year after; it may tower a head higher than its recruiting-sergeant.

CHAPTER VI.

"I BELIEVE," said Lemercier, as the *coupé* rolled through the lively alleys of the Bois de Boulogne, "that Paris is built on a loadstone, and that every Frenchman with some iron globules in his blood is irresistibly attracted towards it. The English never seem to feel for London the passionate devotion that we feel for Paris. On the contrary, the London middle class, the commercialists, the shopkeepers, the clerks, even the superior artisans compelled to do their business in the capital, seem always scheming and pining to have their home out of it, though but in a suburb."

"You have been in London, Frederic?"

"Of course; it is the *mode* to visit that dull and hideous metropolis."

"If it be dull and hideous, no wonder the people who are compelled to do business in it seek the pleasures of home out of it."

"It is very droll that though the middle class entirely govern the melancholy Albion, it is the only country in Europe in which the middle class seem to have no amusements; nay, they legislate against amusement. They have no leisure-day but Sunday; and on that day they close all their theatres,—even their museums and picture-galleries. What amusements there may be in England are for th higher classes and the lowest."

"What are the amusements of the lowest class?"

"Getting drunk."

"Nothing else?"

"Yes. I was taken at night under protection of a policeman to some *cabarets*, where I found crowds of that class which is the stratum below the working class; lads who sweep crossings and hold horses, mendicants, and, I was told, thieves, girls whom a servant-maid would not speak to—very merry—dancing quadrilles and waltzes, and regaling themselves on sausages—the happiest-looking

folks I found in all London—and, I must say, conducting themselves very decently.

"Ah!" Here Lemercier pulled the check-string. "Will you object to a walk in this quiet alley? I see some one whom I have promised the Englishman to—— But heed me, Alain; don't fall in love with her."

CHAPTER VII.

THE lady in the pearl-coloured dress! Certainly it was a face that might well arrest the eye and linger long on the remembrance.

There are certain "beauty-women" as there are certain "beauty-men," in whose features one detects no fault—who are the show figures of any assembly in which they appear—but who, somehow or other, inspire no sentiment and excite no interest; they lack some expression, whether of mind, or of soul, or of heart, without which the most beautiful face is but a beautiful picture. This lady was not one of those "beauty-women." Her features taken singly were by no means perfect, nor were they set off by any brilliancy of colouring. But the countenance aroused and impressed the imagination with a belief that there was some history attached to it which you longed to learn. The hair, simply parted over a forehead unusually spacious and high for a woman, was of lustrous darkness; the eyes, of a deep violet blue, were shaded with long lashes.

Their expression was soft and mournful, but unobservant. She did not notice Alain and Lemercier as the two men slowly passed her. She seemed abstracted, gazing into space as one absorbed in thought or reverie. Her complexion was clear and pale, and apparently betokened delicate health.

Lemercier seated himself on a bench beside the path, and invited Alain to do the same. "She will return this way soon," said the Parisian, "and we can observe her more attentively and more respectfully thus seated than if we were on foot; meanwhile, what do you think of her? Is she French—is she Italian?—can she be English?"

"I should have guessed Italian, judging by the darkness of the hair and the outline of the features? but do Italians have so delicate a fairness of complexion?"

"Very rarely; and I should guess her to be French, judging by the intelligence of her expression, the simple

neatness of her dress, and by that nameless refinement of air in which a Parisienne excels all the descendants of Eve —if it were not for her eyes. I never saw a Frenchwoman with eyes of that peculiar shade of blue; and if a Frenchwoman had such eyes, I flatter myself she would have scarcely allowed us to pass without making some use of them."

"Do you think she is married?" asked Alain.

"I hope so—for a girl of her age, if *comme il faut*, can scarcely walk alone in the Bois, and would not have acquired that look so intelligent—more than intelligent—so poetic."

"But regard that air of unmistakable distinction, regard that expression of face—so pure, so virginal: *comme il faut* she must be."

As Alain said these last words, the lady, who had turned back, was approaching them, and in full view of their gaze. She seemed unconscious of their existence as before, and Lemercier noticed that her lips moved as if she were murmuring inaudibly to herself..

She did not return again, but continued her walk straight on till at the end of the alley she entered a carriage in waiting for her, and was driven off.

"Quick, quick!" cried Lemercier, running towards his own *coupé;* "we must give chase."

Alain followed somewhat less hurriedly, and, agreeably to instructions Lemercier had already given to his coachman, the Parisian's *coupé* set off at full speed in the track of the strange lady's, which was still in sight.

In less than twenty minutes the carriage in chase stopped at the *grille* of one of those charming little villas to be found in the pleasant suburb of A——; a porter emerged from the lodge, opened the gate; the carriage drove in, again stopped at the door of the house, and the two gentlemen could not catch even a glimpse of the lady's robe as she descended from the carriage and disappeared within the house.

"I see a *cafe* yonder," said Lemercier; "let us learn all we can as to the fair unknown, over a *sorbet* or a *petit verre.*"

Alain silently, but not reluctantly, consented. He felt in the fair stranger an interest new to his existence.

They entered the little *café*, and in a few minutes Lemercier, with the easy *savoir vivre* of a Parisian, had extracted from the *garçon* as much as probably any one in the neighbourhood knew of the inhabitants of the villa.

It had been hired and furnished about two months previously in the name of Signora Venosta; but according to the report of the servants, that lady appeared to be the *gouvernante* or guardian of a lady much younger, out of whose income the villa was rented and the household maintained.

It was for her the *coupé* was hired from Paris. The elder lady very rarely stirred out during the day, but always accompanied the younger in any evening visits to the theatre or the houses of friends.

It was only within the last few weeks that such visits had been made.

The younger lady was in delicate health, and under the care of an English physician famous for skill in the treatment of pulmonary complaints. It was by his advice that she took daily walking exercise in the Bois. The establishment consisted of three servants, all Italians, and speaking but imperfect French. The *garçon* did not know whether either of the ladies was married, but their mode of life was free from all scandal or suspicion; they probably belonged to the literary or musical world, as the *garçon* had observed as their visitors the eminent author M. Savarin and his wife; and, still more frequently, an old man not less eminent as a musical composer.

"It is clear to me now," said Lemercier, as the two friends reseated themselves in the carriage, "that our pearly *ange* is some Italian singer of repute enough in her own country to have gained already a competence; and that, perhaps on account of her own health or her friend's, she is living quietly here in the expectation of some professional engagement, or the absence of some foreign lover."

"Lover! do you think that?" exclaimed Alain, in a tone of voice that betrayed pain.

"It is possible enough; and in that case the Englishman may profit little by the information I have promised to give him."

"You have promised the Englishman?"

"Do you not remember last night that he described the lady, and said that her face haunted him: and I——"

"Ah! I remember now. What do you know of this Englishman? He is rich, I suppose."

"Yes, I hear he is very rich now; that an uncle lately left him an enormous sum of money. He was attached to the English Embassy many years ago, which accounts for his good French and his knowledge of Parisian life. He comes to Paris very often, and I have known him some time. Indeed he has intrusted to me a difficult and delicate commission. The English tell me that his father was one of the most eminent members of their Parliament, of ancient birth, very highly connected, but ran out his fortune and died poor; that our friend had for some years to maintain himself, I fancy, by his pen; that he is considered very able; and, now that his uncle has enriched him, likely to enter public life and run a career as distinguished as his father's."

"Happy man! happy are the English," said the Marquis, with a sigh; and as the carriage now entered Paris, he pleaded the excuse of an engagement, bade his friend good-bye, and went his way musing through the crowded streets.

CHAPTER VIII.

LETTER FROM ISAURA CICOGNA TO MADAME DE GRANTMESNIL,

VILLA D'——, *A* . . . .

I CAN never express to you, my beloved Eulalie, the strange charm which a letter from you throws over my poor little lonely world for days after it is received. There is always in it something that comforts, something that sustains, but also a something that troubles and disquiets me. I suppose Goethe is right, "that it is the property of true genius to disturb all settled ideas," in order, no doubt, to lift them into a higher level when they settle down again.

Your sketch of the new work you are meditating amid the orange groves of Provence interests me intensely; yet, do you forgive me when I add that the interest is not without terror. I do not find myself able to comprehend how, amid those lovely scenes of nature, your mind voluntarily surrounds itself with images of pain and discord. I stand in awe of the calm with which you subject to your analysis the infirmities of reason and the tumults of passion. And all those laws of the social state which seem to be so fixed and immovable you treat with so quiet a scorn, as if they were but the gossamer threads which a touch of your slight woman's hand could brush away. But I cannot venture to discuss such subjects with you. It is only the skilled enchanter who can stand safely in the magic circle, and compel the spirits that he summons, even if they are evil, to minister to ends in which he foresees a good.

We continue to live here very quietly, and I do not as yet feel the worse for the colder climate. Indeed, my wonderful doctor, who was recommended to me as American, but is in reality English, assures me that a single winter spent here under his care will suffice for my complete re-establishment. Yet that career, to the training for which

so many years have been devoted, does not seem to me so alluring as it once did.

I have much to say on this subject, which I defer till I can better collect my own thoughts on it—at present they are confused and struggling. The great *Maestro* has been most gracious.

In what a radiant atmosphere his genius lives and breathes! Even in his cynical moods, his very cynicism has in it the ring of the jocund music—the laugh of Figaro, not of Mephistopheles.

We went to dine with him last week; he invited to meet us Madame S——, who has this year conquered all opposition, and reigns alone, the great S——. Mr. T——, a pianist of admirable promise—your friend M. Savarin, wit, critic, and poet, with his pleasant sensible wife, and a few others whom the *Maestro* confided to me in a whisper, were authorities in the press. After dinner S—— sang to us, magnificently, of course. Then she herself graciously turned to me, said how much she had heard from the *Maestro* in my praise, and so-and-so. I was persuaded to sing after her. I need not say to what disadvantage. But I forgot my nervousness; I forgot my audience; I forgot myself, as I always do when once my soul, as it were, finds wing in music, and buoys itself in air, relieved from the sense of earth. I knew not that I had succeeded till I came to a close, and then my eyes resting on the face of the grand *prima donna*, I was seized with an indescribable sadness—with a keen pang of remorse. Perfect *artiste* though she be, and with powers in her own realm of art which admit of no living equal, I saw at once that I had pained her; she had grown almost livid; her lips were quivering, and it was only with a great effort that she muttered out some faint words intended for applause. I comprehended by an instinct how gradually there can grow upon the mind of an artist the most generous that jealousy which makes the fear of a rival annihilate the delight in art. If ever I should achieve S——'s fame as a singer, should I feel the same jealousy? I think not now, but I have not been tested. She went away abruptly. I spare you the recital of the compliments paid to me by my other auditors, compliments that gave me no pleasure; for on all lips, except those of the *Maestro*, they implied, as the height

of eulogy, that I had inflicted torture upon S——. "If so," said he, "she would be as foolish as a rose that was jealous of the whiteness of a lily. You would do yourself great wrong, my child, if you tried to vie with the rose in its own colour."

He patted my bended head as he spoke, with that kind of fatherly king-like fondness with which he honours me; and I took his hand in mine, and kissed it gratefully. "Nevertheless," said Savarin, "when the lily comes out there will be a furious attack on it, made by the clique that devotes itself to the rose: a lily clique will be formed *en revanche*, and I foresee a fierce paper war. Do not be frightened at its first outburst; every fame worth having must be fought for."

Is it so? have you had to fight for your fame, Eulalie? and do you hate all contests as much as I do?

Our only other gaiety since I last wrote was a *soirée* at M. Louvier's. That republican *millionnaire* was not slow in attending to the kind letter you addressed to him recommending us to his civilities. He called at once, placed his good offices at our disposal, took charge of my modest fortune, which he has invested, no doubt, as safely as it is advantageously in point of interest, hired our carriage for us, and in short has been most amiably useful.

At his house we met many to me most pleasant, for they spoke with such genuine appreciation of your works and yourself. But there were others whom I should never have expected to meet under the roof of a Crœsus who has so great a stake in the order of things established. One young man—a noble whom he specially presented to me, as a politician who would be at the head of affairs when the Red Republic was established—asked me whether I did not agree with him that all private property was public spoliation, and that the great enemy to civilisation was religion, no matter in what form.

He addressed to me these tremendous questions with an effeminate lisp, and harangued on them with small feeble gesticulations of pale dainty fingers covered with rings.

I asked him if there were many who in France shared his ideas.

"Quite enough to carry them some day," he answered,

with a lofty smile. "And the day may be nearer than the world thinks, when my *confrères* will be so numerous that they will have to shoot down each other for the sake of cheese to their bread."

That day nearer than the world thinks! Certainly, so far as one may judge the outward signs of the world at Paris, it does not think of such things at all. With what an air of self-content the beautiful city parades her riches! Who can gaze on her splendid palaces, her gorgeous shops, and believe that she will give ear to doctrines that would annihilate private rights of property; or who can enter her crowded churches, and dream that she can ever again instal a republic too civilised for religion?

Adieu. Excuse me for this dull letter. If I have written on much that has little interest even for me, it is that I wish to distract my mind from brooding over the question that interests me most, and on which I most need your counsel. I will try to approach it in my next.

ISAURA.

From the Same to the Same.

Eulalie, Eulalie!—What mocking spirit has been permitted in this modern age of ours to place in the heart of woman the ambition which is the prerogative of men?—You indeed, so richly endowed with a man's genius, have a right to man's aspirations. But what can justify such ambition in me? Nothing but this one unintellectual perishable gift of a voice that does but please in uttering the thoughts of others. Doubtless I could make a name familiar for its brief time to the talk of Europe—a name, what name? a singer's name. Once I thought that name a glory. Shall I ever forget the day when you first shone upon me; when, emerging from childhood as from a dim and solitary bypath, I stood forlorn on the great thoroughfare of life, and all the prospects before me stretched sad in mists and in rain? You beamed on me then as the sun coming out from the cloud and changing the face of earth; you opened to my sight the fairy-land of poetry and art; you took me by the hand and said, "Courage! there is at each step some green gap in the hedgerows, some soft escape from the stony thoroughfare. Beside the real life expands the ideal life to those who seek it. Droop not,

seek it; the ideal life has its sorrows, but it never admits despair; as on the ear of him who follows the winding course of a stream, the stream ever varies the note of its music, now loud with the rush of the falls; now low and calm as it glides by the level marge of smooth banks; now sighing through the stir of the reeds; now babbling with a fretful joy as some sudden curve on the shore stays its flight among gleaming pebbles;—so to the soul of the artist is the voice of the art ever fleeting beside and before him. Nature gave thee the bird's gift of song—raise the gift into art, and make the art thy companion.

"Art and Hope were twin-born, and they die together."

See how faithfully I remember, methinks, your very words. But the magic of the words, which I then but dimly understood, was in your smile and in your eye, and the queen-like wave of your hand as if beckoning to a world which lay before you, visible and familiar as your native land. And how devotedly, with what earnestness of passion, I gave myself up to the task of raising my gift into an art! I thought of nothing else, dreamed of nothing else; and oh, how sweet to me then were words of praise! "Another year yet," at length said the masters, "and you ascend your throne among the queens of song." Then—then—I would have changed for no other throne on earth my hope of that to be achieved in the realms of my art. And then came that long fever: my strength broke down, and the *Maestro* said, "Rest, or your voice is gone, and your throne is lost for ever." How hateful that rest seemed to me! You again came to my aid. You said, "The time you think lost should be but time improved. Penetrate your mind with other songs than the trash of *Libretti*. The more you habituate yourself to the forms, the more you imbue yourself with the spirit, in which passions have been expressed and character delineated by great writers, the more completely you will accomplish yourself in your own special art of singer and actress." So, then, you allured me to a new study. Ah! in so doing did you dream that you diverted me from the old ambition? My knowledge of French and Italian, and my rearing in childhood, which had made English familiar to me, gave me the keys to the treasure-houses of three languages. Naturally I began with that in which your

masterpieces are composed. Till then I had not even read your works, They were the first I chose. How they impressed, how they startled me! what depths in the mind of man, in the heart of woman, they revealed to me! But I owned to you then, and I repeat it now, neither they nor any of the works in romance and poetry which form the boast of recent French literature, satisfied yearnings for that calm sense of beauty, that divine joy in a world beyond this world, which you had led me to believe it was the prerogative of ideal art to bestow. And when I told you this with the rude frankness you had bid me exercise in talk with you, a thoughtful melancholy shade fell over your face, and you said quietly, "You are right, child; we, the French of our time, are the offspring of revolutions that settled nothing, unsettled all: we resemble those troubled States which rush into war abroad in order to re-establish peace at home. Our books suggest problems to men for reconstructing some social system in which the calm that belongs to art may be found at last: but such books should not be in your hands; they are not for the innocence and youth of women, as yet unchanged by the systems which exist." And the next day you brought me Tasso's great poem, the *Gerusalemme Liberata*, and said, smiling, "Art in its calm is here."

You remember that I was then at Sorrento by the order of my physician. Never shall I forget the soft autumn day when I sat amongst the lonely rocklets to the left of the town—the sea before me, with scarce a ripple; my very heart steeped in the melodies of that poem, so marvellous for a strength disguised in sweetness, and for a symmetry in which each proportion blends into the other with the perfectness of a Grecian statue. The whole place seemed to me filled with the presence of the poet to whom it had given birth. Certainly the reading of that poem formed an era in my existence; to this day I cannot acknowledge the faults or weaknesses which your criticisms pointed out—I believe because they are in unison with my own nature, which yearns for harmony, and, finding that, rests contented. I shrink from violent contrasts, and can discover nothing tame and insipid in a continuance of sweetness and serenity. But it was not till after I had read *La Gerusalemme* again and again, and then sat and brooded

over it, that I recognised the main charm of the poem in the religion which clings to it as the perfume clings to a flower—a religion sometimes melancholy, but never to me sad. Hope always pervades it. Surely if, as you said, "Hope is twin-born with art," it is because art at its highest blends itself unconsciously with religion, and proclaims its affinity with hope by its faith in some future good more perfect than it has realised in the past.

Be this as it may, it was in this poem so pre-eminently Christian that I found the something which I missed and craved for in modern French masterpieces, even yours—a something spiritual, speaking to my own soul, calling it forth; distinguishing it as an essence apart from mere human reason; soothing, even when it excited; making earth nearer to heaven. And when I ran on in this strain to you after my own wild fashion, you took my head between your hands and kissed me, and said, "Happy are those who believe! long may that happiness be thine!" Why did I not feel in Dante the Christian charm that I felt in Tasso? Dante in your eyes, as in those of most judges, is infinitely the greater genius, but reflected on the dark stream of that genius the stars are so troubled, the heaven so threatening.

Just as my year of holiday was expiring, I turned to English literature; and Shakespeare, of course, was the first English poet put into my hands. It proves how child-like my mind still was, that my earliest sensation in reading him was that of disappointment. It was not only that, despite my familiarity with English (thanks chiefly to the care of him whom I call my second father), there is much in the metaphorical diction of Shakespeare which I failed to comprehend; but he seemed to me so far like the modern French writers who affect to have found inspiration in his muse, that he obtrudes images of pain and suffering without cause or motive sufficiently clear to ordinary understandings, as I had taught myself to think it ought to be in the drama.

He makes Fate so cruel that we lose sight of the mild deity behind her. Compare, in this, Corneille's "*Polyeucte*," with the "Hamlet." In the first an equal calamity befalls the good, but in their calamity they are blessed. The death of the martyr is the triumph of his creed. But when we

have put down the English tragedy—when Hamlet and Ophelia are confounded in death with Polonius and the fratricidal king, we see not what good end for humanity is achieved. The passages that fasten on our memory do not make us happier and holier; they suggest but terrible problems, to which they give us no solution.

In the "*Horaces*" of Corneille there are fierce contests, rude passions, tears drawn from some of the bitterest sources of human pity; but then through all stands out, large and visible to the eyes of all spectators, the great ideal of devoted patriotism. How much of all that has been grandest in the life of France, redeeming even its worst crimes of revolution in the love of country, has had its origin in the "*Horaces*" of Corneille. But I doubt if the fates of Coriolanus, and Cæsar, and Brutus, and Antony, in the giant tragedies of Shakespeare, have made Englishmen more willing to die for England. In fine, it was long before—I will not say I understood or rightly appreciated Shakespeare, for no Englishman would admit that I or even you could ever do so,—but before I could recognise the justice of the place his country claims for him as the genius without an equal in the literature of Europe. Meanwhile the ardour I had put into study, and the wear and tear of the emotions which the study called forth, made themselves felt in a return of my former illness, with symptoms still more alarming; and when the year was out I was ordained to rest for perhaps another year before I could sing in public, still less appear on the stage. How I rejoiced when I heard that fiat! for I emerged from that year of study with a heart utterly estranged from the profession in which I had centred my hopes before ——. Yes, Eulalie, you had bid me accomplish myself for the arts of utterance by the study of arts in which thoughts originate the words they employ; and in doing so—I had changed myself into another being. I was forbidden all fatigue of mind; my books were banished, but not the new self which the books had formed. Recovering slowly through the summer, I came hither two months since, ostensibly for the advice of Dr. C——, but really in the desire to commune with my own heart, and be still.

And now I have poured forth that heart to you—would you persuade me still to be a singer? If you do, remember

at least how jealous and absorbing the art of the singer and of the actress is. How completely I must surrender myself to it, and live among books, or among dreams, no more. Can I be anything else but singer? and if not, should I be contented merely to read and to dream?

I must confide to you one ambition which during the lazy Italian summer took possession of me—I must tell you the ambition, and add that I have renounced it as a vain one. I had hoped that I could compose, I mean in music. I was pleased with some things I did—they expressed in music what I could not express in words; and one secret object in coming here was to submit them to the great *Maestro*. He listened to them patiently; he complimented me on my accuracy in the mechanical laws of composition; he even said that my favourite airs were "*touchants et gracieux*."

And so he would have left me, but I stopped him timidly, and said, "Tell me frankly, do you think that with time and study I could compose music such as singers equal to myself would sing to?"

"You mean as a professional composer?"

"Well, yes."

"And to the abandonment of your vocation as a singer?"

"Yes."

"My dear child, I should be your worst enemy if I encouraged such a notion; cling to the career in which you can be greatest; gain but health, and I wager my reputation on your glorious success on the stage. What can you be as a composer? You will set pretty music to pretty words, and will be sung in drawing-rooms with the fame a little more or less that generally attends the compositions of female amateurs. Aim at something higher, as I know you would do, and you will not succeed. Is there any instance in modern times, perhaps in any times, of a female composer who attains even to the eminence of a third-rate opera writer? Composition in letters may be of no sex. In that Madame Dudevant and your friend Madame de Grantmesnil can beat most men; but the genius of musical composition is *homme*, and accept it as a compliment when I say that you are essentially *femme*."

He left me, of course, mortified and humbled; but I feel

he is right as regards myself, though whether in his depreciation of our whole sex I cannot say. But as this hope has left me, I have become more disquieted, still more restless. Counsel me, Eulalie; counsel, and, if possible, comfort me.

ISAURA.

From the Same to the Same.

No letter from you yet, and I have left you in peace for ten days. How do you think I have spent them? The *Maestro* called on us with M. Savarin, to insist on our accompanying them on a round of the theatres. I had not been to one since my arrival. I divined that the kind-hearted composer had a motive in this invitation. He thought that in witnessing the applauses bestowed on actors, and sharing in the fascination in which theatrical illusion holds an audience, my old passion for the stage, and with it the longing for an *artiste's* fame, would revive.

In my heart I wished that his expectations might be realised. Well for me if I could once more concentre all my aspirations on a prize within my reach!

We went first to see a comedy greatly in vogue, and the author thoroughly understands the French stage of our day. The acting was excellent in its way. The next night we went to the *Odéon*, a romantic melodrama in six acts, and I know not how many *tableaux*. I found no fault with the acting there. I do not give you the rest of our programme. We visited all the principal theatres, reserving the opera and Madame S—— for the last. Before I speak of the opera, let me say a word or two on the plays.

There is no country in which the theatre has so great a hold on the public as in France; no country in which the successful dramatist has so high a fame; no country perhaps in which the state of the stage so faithfully represents the moral and intellectual condition of the people. I say this not, of course, from my experience of countries which I have not visited, but from all I hear of the stage in Germany and in England.

The impression left on my mind by the performances I witnessed is, that the French people are becoming dwarfed. The comedies that please them are but pleasant caricatures

of petty sections in a corrupt society. They contain no large types of human nature; their witticisms convey no luminous flashes of truth; their sentiment is not pure and noble—it is a sickly and false perversion of the impure and ignoble into travesties of the pure and noble.

Their melodramas cannot be classed as literature—all that really remains of the old French genius is its *vaudeville*.

Great dramatists create great parts. One great part, such as a Rachel would gladly have accepted, I have not seen in the dramas of the young generation.

High art has taken refuge in the opera; but that is not French opera. I do not complain so much that French taste is less refined. I complain that French intellect is lowered. The descent from Polyeucte to Ruy Blas is great, not so much in the poetry of form as in the elevation of thought; but the descent from Ruy Blas to the best drama now produced is out of poetry altogether, and into those flats of prose which give not even the glimpse of a mountain-top.

But now to the opera. S—— in Norma! The house was crowded, and its enthusiasm as loud as it was genuine. You tell me that S—— never rivalled Pasta, but certainly her Norma is a great performance. Her voice has lost less of its freshness than I had been told, and what is lost of it her practised management conceals or carries off.

The *Maestro* was quite right—I could never vie with her in her own line; but conceited and vain as I may seem even to you in saying so, I feel in my own line that I could command as large an applause—of course taking into account my brief-lived advantage of youth. Her acting, apart from her voice, does not please me. It seems to me to want intelligence of the subtler feelings, the undercurrent of emotion which constitutes the chief beauty of the situation and the character. Am I jealous when I say this? Read on and judge.

On our return that night, when I had seen the Venosta to bed, I went into my own room, opened the window, and looked out. A lovely night, mild as in spring at Florence—the moon at her full, and the stars looking so calm and so high beyond our reach of their tranquillity. The evergreens in the gardens of the villas around me silvered over,

and the summer boughs, not yet clothed with leaves, were scarcely visible amid the changeless smile of the laurels. At the distance lay Paris, only to be known by its innumerable lights. And then I said to myself—

"No, I cannot be an actress; I cannot resign my real self for that vamped-up hypocrite before the lamps. Out on those stage-robes and painted cheeks! Out on that simulated utterance of sentiments learned by rote and practised before the looking-glass till every gesture has its drill!"

Then I gazed on those stars which provoke our questionings, and return no answer, till my heart grew full, so full, and I bowed my head and wept like a child.

From the Same to the Same.

And still no letter from you! I see in the journals that you have left Nice. Is it that you are too absorbed in your work to have leisure to write to me? I know you are not ill; for if you were, all Paris would know of it. All Europe has an interest in your health. Positively I will write to you no more till a word from yourself bids me do so.

I fear I must give up my solitary walks in the Bois de Boulogne: they were very dear to me, partly because the quiet path to which I confined myself was that to which you directed me as the one you habitually selected when at Paris, and in which you had brooded over and revolved the loveliest of your romances; and partly because it was there that, catching, alas! not inspiration but enthusiasm from the genius that had hallowed the place, and dreaming I might originate music, I nursed my own aspirations and murmured my own airs. And though so close to that world of Paris to which all artists must appeal for judgment or audience, the spot was so undisturbed, so sequestered. But of late that path has lost its solitude, and therefore its charm.

Six days ago the first person I encountered in my walk was a man whom I did not then heed. He seemed in thought, or rather in reverie, like myself; we passed each other twice or thrice, and I did not notice whether he was young or old, tall or short; but he came the next day, and

a third day, and then I saw that he was young, and, in so regarding him, his eyes became fixed on mine. The fourth day he did not come, but two other men came, and the look of one was inquisitive and offensive. They sat themselves down on a bench in the walk, and though I did not seem to notice them, I hastened home; and the next day, in talking with our kind Madame Savarin, and alluding to these quiet walks of mine, she hinted, with the delicacy which is her characteristic, that the customs of Paris did not allow Demoiselles *comme il faut* to walk alone even in the most sequestered paths of the Bois.

I begin now to comprehend your disdain of customs which impose chains so idly galling on the liberty of our sex.

We dined with the Savarins last evening: what a joyous nature he has! Not reading Latin, I only know Horace by translations, which I am told are bad; but Savarin seems to me a sort of half Horace. Horace on his town-bred side, so playfully well-bred, so good-humoured in his philosophy, so affectionate to friends, and so biting to foes. But certainly Savarin could not have lived in a country farm upon endives and mallows. He is town-bred and Parisian, *jusqu'au bout des ongles*. How he admires you, and how I love him for it! Only in one thing he disappoints me there. It is your style that he chiefly praises: certainly that style is matchless; but style is only the clothing of thought, and to praise your style seems to me almost as invidious as the compliment to some perfect beauty, not on her form and face, but on her taste and dress.

We met at dinner an American and his wife—a Colonel and Mrs. Morley: she is delicately handsome, as the American women I have seen generally are, and with that frank vivacity of manner which distinguishes them from English women. She seemed to take a fancy to me, and we soon grew very good friends.

She is the first advocate I have met, except yourself, of that doctrine upon the rights of Women—of which one reads more in the journals than one hears discussed in *salons*.

Naturally enough I felt great interest in that subject, more especially since my rambles in the Bois were for-

bidden; and as long as she declaimed on the hard fate of the women who, feeling within them powers that struggle for air and light beyond the close precinct of household duties, find themselves restricted from fair rivalry with men in such fields of knowledge and toil and glory, as men since the world began have appropriated to themselves, I need not say that I went with her cordially: you can guess that by my former letters. But when she entered into the detailed catalogue of our exact wrongs and our exact rights, I felt all the pusillanimity of my sex, and shrank back in terror.

Her husband, joining us when she was in full tide of eloquence, smiled at me with a kind of saturnine mirth "Mademoiselle, don't believe a word she says; it is only tall talk! In America the women are absolute tyrants, and it is I who, in concert with my oppressed countrymen, am going in for a platform agitation to restore the Rights of Men."

Upon this there was a lively battle of words between the spouses, in which, I must own, I thought the lady was decidedly worsted.

No, Eulalie, I see nothing in these schemes for altering our relations towards the other sex which would improve our condition. The inequalities we suffer are not imposed by law—not even by convention; they are imposed by nature.

Eulalie, you have had an experience unknown to me; you have loved. In that day did you—you, round whom poets and sages and statesmen gather, listening to your words as to an oracle—did you feel that your pride of genius had gone out from you—that your ambition lived in him whom you loved—that his smile was more to you than the applause of a world?

I feel as if love in a woman must destroy her rights of equality—that it gives to her a sovereign even in one who would be inferior to herself if her love did not glorify and crown him. Ah! if I could but merge this terrible egotism which oppresses me, into the being of some one who is what I would wish to be were I man! I would not ask him to achieve fame. Enough if I felt that he was worthy of it, and happier methinks to console him when he failed than to triumph with him when he won. Tell

me, have you felt this? When you loved did you stoop as to a slave, or did you bow down as to a master?

From Madame de Grantmesnil to Isaura Cicogna.

Chère enfant,—All your four letters have reached me the same day. In one of my sudden whims I set off with a few friends on a rapid tour along the Riviera to Genoa, thence to Turin on to Milan. Not knowing where we should rest even for a day, my letters were not forwarded.

I came back to Nice yesterday, consoled for all fatigues in having insured that accuracy in description of localities which my work necessitates.

You are, my poor child, in that révolutionary crisis through which genius passes in youth before it knows its own self, and longs vaguely to do or to be a something other than it has done or has been before. For, not to be unjust to your own powers, genius you have—that inborn undefinable essence, including talent, and yet distinct from it. Genius you have, but genius unconcentrated, undisciplined. I see, though you are too diffident to say so openly, that you shrink from the fame of singer, because, fevered by your reading, you would fain aspire to the thorny crown of author. I echo the hard saying of the *Maestro*, I should be your worst enemy did I encourage you to forsake a career in which a dazzling success is so assured, for one in which, if it were your true vocation, you would not ask whether you were fit for it; you would be impelled to it by the terrible star which presides over the birth of poets.

Have you, who are so naturally observant, and of late have become so reflective, never remarked that authors, however absorbed in their own craft, do not wish their children to adopt it? The most successful author is perhaps the last person to whom neophytes should come for encouragement. This I think is not the case with the cultivators of the sister arts. The painter, the sculptor, the musician, seem disposed to invite disciples and welcome acolytes. As for those engaged in the practical affairs of life, fathers mostly wish their sons to be as they have been.

The politician, the lawyer, the merchant, each says to

his children, "Follow my steps." All parents in practical life would at least agree in this—they would not wish their sons to be poets. There must be some sound cause in the world's philosophy for this general concurrence of digression from a road of which the travellers themselves say to those whom they love best, "Beware!"

Romance in youth is, if rightly understood, the happiest nutriment of wisdom in after-years; but I would never invite any one to look upon the romance of youth as a thing

"To case in periods and embalm in ink."

Enfant, have you need of a publisher to create romance? Is it not in yourself? Do not imagine that genius requires for its emjoyment the scratch of the pen and the types of the printer. Do not suppose that the poet, the *romancier*, is most poetic, most romantic, when he is striving, struggling, labouring, to check the rush of his ideas, and materialise the images which visit him as souls into such tangible likenesses of flesh and blood that the highest compliment a reader can bestow on them is to say that they are lifelike? No: the poet's real delight is not in the mechanism of composing; the best part of that delight is in the sympathies he has established with innumerable modifications of life and form, and art and nature—sympathies which are often found equally keen in those who have not the same gift of language. The poet is but the interpreter. What of?—Truths in the hearts of others. He utters what they feel. Is the joy in the utterance? Nay, it is in the feeling itself. So, my dear, dark-bright child of song, when I bade thee open, out of the beaten thoroughfare, paths into the meads and river-banks at bither side of the formal hedgerows, rightly dost thou add that I enjoined thee to make thine art thy companion. In the culture of that art for which you are so eminently gifted, you will find the ideal life ever beside the real. Are you not ashamed to tell me that in that art you do but utter the thoughts of others? You utter them in music; through the music you not only give to the thoughts a new character, but you make them reproductive of fresh thoughts in your audience.

You said very truly that you found in composing you

could put into music thoughts which you could not put into words. That is the peculiar distinction of music. No genuine musician can explain in words exactly what he means to convey in his music.

How little a *libretto* interprets an opera—how little we care even to read it! It is the music that speaks to us; and how?—Through the human voice. We do not notice how poor are the words which the voice warbles. It is the voice itself interpreting the soul of the musician which enchants and enthralls us. And you who have that voice pretend to despise the gift. What! despise the power of communicating delight!—the power that we authors envy and rarely, is ever, can we give delight with so little alloy as the singer.

And when an audience disperses, can you guess what griefs the singer may have comforted? what hard hearts he may have softened? what high thoughts he may have awakened?

You say, "Out on the vamped-up hypocrite! Out on the stage-robes and painted cheeks!"

I say, "Out on the morbid spirit which so cynically regards the mere details by which a whole effect on the minds and hearts and souls of races and nations can be produced!"

There, have I scolded you sufficiently? I should scold you more, if I did not see in the affluence of your youth and your intellect the cause of your restlessness. Riches are always restless. It is only to poverty that the gods give content.

You question me about love: you ask if I have ever bowed to a master, ever merged my life in another's: expect no answer on this from me. Circe herself could give no answer to the simplest maid, who, never having loved, asks, "What is love?"

In the history of the passions each human heart is a world in itself; its experience profits no others. In no two lives does love play the same part or bequeath the same record.

I know not whether I am glad or sorry that the word "love" now falls on my ear with a sound as slight and as faint as the dropping of a leaf in autumn may fall on thine.

I volunteer but this lesson, the wisest I can give, if thou canst understand it: as I bade thee take art into thy life, so learn to look on life itself as an art. Thou couldst discover the charm in Tasso; thou couldst perceive that the requisite of all art, that which pleases, is in the harmony of proportion. We lose sight of beauty if we exaggerate the feature most beautiful.

Love proportioned, adorns the homeliest existence; love disproportioned, deforms the fairest.

Alas! wilt thou remember this warning when the time comes in which it may be needed?

E—— G——.

BOOK II.

BOOK II.

CHAPTER I.

It is several weeks after the date of the last chapter; the lime-trees in the Tuileries are clothed in green.

In a somewhat spacious apartment on the ground-floor in the quiet locality of the Rue d'Anjou, a man was seated, very still, and evidently absorbed in deep thought, before a writing-table placed close to the window.

Seen thus, there was an expression of great power both of intellect and of character in a face which, in ordinary social commune, might rather be noticeable for an aspect of hardy frankness, suiting well with the clear-cut, handsome profile, and the rich dark auburn hair, waving carelessly over one of those broad open foreheads, which, according to an old writer, seem the "frontispiece of a temple dedicated to Honour."

The forehead, indeed, was the man's most remarkable feature. It could not but prepossess the beholder. When, in private theatricals, he had need to alter the character of his countenance, he did it effectually, merely by forcing down his hair till it reached his eyebrows. He no longer then looked like the same man.

The person I describe has been already introduced to the reader as Graham Vane. But perhaps this is the fit occasion to enter into some such details as to his parentage and position as may make the introduction more satisfactory and complete.

His father, the representative of a very ancient family, came into possession, after a long minority, of what may be called a fair squire's estate, and about half a million in moneyed investments, inherited on the female side. Both land and money were absolutely at his disposal, unencumbered by entail or settlement. He was a man of a brilliant, irregular genius, of princely generosity, of splendid taste, of a gorgeous kind of pride closely allied to a masculine kind of vanity. As soon as he was of age he began to

build, converting his squire's hall into a ducal palace He then stood for the county; and in days before the first Reform Bill, when a county election was to the estate of a candidate what a long war is to the debt of a nation. He won the election; he obtained early successes in Parliament. It was said by good authorities in political circles that, if he chose, he might aspire to lead his party, and ultimately to hold the first rank in the government of his country.

That may or may not be true; but certainly he did not choose to take the trouble necessary for such an ambition. He was too fond of pleasure, of luxury, of pomp. He kept a famous stud of racers and hunters. He was a munificent patron of art. His establishments, his entertainments, were on a par with those of the great noble who represented the loftiest (Mr. Vane would not own it to be the oldest) branch of his genealogical tree.

He became indifferent to political contests, indolent in his attendance at the House, speaking seldom, not at great length nor with much preparation, but with power and fire, originality and genius; so that he was not only effective as an orator, but combining with eloquence advantages of birth, person, station, the reputation of patriotic independence, and genial attributes of character, he was an authority of weight in the scales of party.

This gentleman, at the age of forty, married the dowerless daughter of a poor but distinguished naval officer, of noble family, first cousin to the Duke of Alton.

He settled on her a suitable jointure, but declined to tie up any portion of his property for the benefit of children by the marriage. He declared that so much of his fortune was invested either in mines, the produce of which was extremely fluctuating, or in various funds, over rapid transfers in which it was his amusement and his interest to have control, unchecked by reference to trustees, that entails and settlements on children were an inconvenience he declined to incur.

Besides, he held notions of his own as to the wisdom of keeping children dependent on their father. "What numbers of young men," said he, "are ruined in character and in fortune by knowing that when their father dies they are certain of the same provision, no matter how they displease

him ; and in the meanwhile forestalling that provision by recourse to usurers." These arguments might not have prevailed over the bride's father a year or two later, when, by the death of intervening kinsmen, he became Duke of Alton; but in his then circumstances the marriage itself was so much beyond the expectations which the portionless daughter of a sea-captain has the right to form, that Mr. Vane had it all his own way, and he remained absolute master of his whole fortune, save of that part of his landed estate on which his wife's jointure was settled ; and even from this encumbrance he was very soon freed. His wife died in the second year of marriage, leaving an only son—Graham. He grieved for her loss with all the passion of an impressionable, ardent, and powerful nature. Then for a while he sought distraction to his sorrow by throwing himself into public life with a devoted energy he had not previously displayed.

His speeches served to bring his party into power, and he yielded, though reluctantly, to the unanimous demand of that party that he should accept one of the highest offices in the new Cabinet. He acquitted himself well as an administrator, but declared, no doubt honestly, that he felt like Sinbad released from the old man on his back, when, a year or two afterwards, he went out of office with his party. No persuasions could induce him to come in again; nor did he ever again take a very active part in debate. "No," said he, "I was born to the freedom of a private gentleman—intolerable to me is the thraldom of a public servant. But I will bring up my son so that he may acquit the debt which I decline to pay to my country." There he kept his word. Graham had been carefully educated for public life, the ambition for it dinned into his ear from childhood. In his school-vacations his father made him learn and declaim chosen specimens of masculine oratory ; engaged an eminent actor to give him lessons in elocution ; bade him frequent theatres, and study there the effect which words derive from looks and gesture; encouraged him to take part himself in private theatricals. To all this the boy lent his mind with delight. He had the orator's inborn temperament ; quick, yet imaginative, and loving the sport of rivalry and contest. Being also, in his boyish years, good-humoured and joyous, he was not more a

favourite with the masters in the schoolroom than with the boys in the playground. Leaving Eton at seventeen, he then entered at Cambridge, and became, in his first term, the most popular speaker at the Union.

But his father cut short his academical career, and decided, for reasons of his own, to place him at once in Diplomacy. He was attached to the Embassy at Paris, and partook of the pleasures and dissipations of that metropolis too keenly to retain much of the sterner ambition to which he had before devoted himself. Becoming one of the spoiled darlings of fashion, there was great danger that his character would relax into the easy grace of the Epicurean, when all such loiterings in the Rose Garden were brought to abrupt close by a rude and terrible change in his fortunes.

His father was killed by a fall from his horse in hunting; and when his affairs were investigated, they were found to be hopelessly involved—apparently the assets would not suffice for the debts. The elder Vane himself was probably not aware of the extent of his liabilities. He had never wanted ready money to the last. He could always obtain that from a money-lender, or from the sale of his funded investments. But it became obvious, on examining his papers, that he knew at least how impaired would be the heritage he should bequeath to a son whom he idolised. For that reason he had given Graham a profession in diplomacy, and for that reason he had privately applied to the Ministry for the Viceroyalty of India, in the event of its speedy vacancy. He was eminent enough not to anticipate refusal, and with economy in that lucrative post much of his pecuniary difficulties might have been redeemed, and at least an independent provision secured for his son.

Graham, like Alain de Rochebriant, allowed no reproach on his father's memory—indeed, with more reason than Alain, for the elder Vane's fortune had at least gone on no mean and frivolous dissipation.

It had lavished itself on encouragement to art—on great objects of public beneficence—on public-spirited aid of political objects; and even in mere selfish enjoyments there was a certain grandeur in his princely hospitalities, in his munificent generosity, in a warm-hearted carelessness for

money. No indulgence in petty follies or degrading vices aggravated the offence of the magnificent squanderer.

"Let me look on my loss of fortune as a gain to myself," said Graham, manfully. "Had I been a rich man, my experience of Paris tells me that I should most likely have been a very idle one. Now that I have no gold, I must dig in myself for iron."

The man to whom he said this was an uncle-in-law—if I may use that phrase—the Right Hon. Richard King, popularly styled "the blameless King."

This gentleman had married the sister of Graham's mother, whose loss in his infancy and boyhood she had tenderly and anxiously sought to supply. It is impossible to conceive a woman more fitted to invite love and reverence than was Lady Janet King, her manners were so sweet and gentle, her whole nature so elevated and pure.

Her father had succeeded to the dukedom when she married Mr. King, and the alliance was not deemed quite suitable. Still it was not one to which the Duke would have been fairly justified in refusing his assent.

Mr. King could not, indeed, boast of noble ancestry, nor was he even a landed proprietor; but he was a not undistinguished member of Parliament, of irreproachable character, and ample fortune inherited from a distant kinsman, who had enriched himself as a merchant. It was on both sides a marriage of love.

It is popularly said that a man uplifts a wife to his own rank; it as often happens that a woman uplifts her husband to the dignity of her own character. Richard King rose greatly in public estimation after his marriage with Lady Janet.

She united to a sincere piety a very active and a very enlightened benevolence. She guided his ambition aside from mere party politics into subjects of social and religious interest, and in devoting himself to these he achieved a position more popular and more respected than he could ever have won in the strife of party.

When the Government of which the elder Vane became a leading Minister was formed, it was considered a great object to secure a name so high in the religious world, so beloved by the working classes, as that of Richard King;

and he accepted one of those places which, though not in the Cabinet, confers the rank of Privy Councillor.

When that brief-lived Administration ceased, he felt the same sensation of relief that Vane had felt, and came to the same resolution never again to accept office, but from different reasons, all of which need not now be detailed. Amongst them, however, certainly this:—He was exceedingly sensitive to opinion, thin-skinned as to abuse, and very tenacious of the respect due to his peculiar character of sanctity and philanthropy. He writhed under every newspaper article that had made "the blameless King" responsible for the iniquities of the Government to which he belonged. In the loss of office he seemed to recover his former throne.

Mr. King heard Graham's resolution with a grave approving smile, and his interest in the young man became greatly increased. He devoted himself strenuously to the object of saving to Graham some wrecks of his paternal fortunes, and having a clear head and great experience in the transaction of business, he succeeded beyond the most sanguine expectations formed by the family solicitor. A rich manufacturer was found to purchase at a fancy price the bulk of the estate with the palatial mansion, which the estate alone could never have sufficed to maintain with suitable establishments.

So that when all debts were paid, Graham found himself in possession of a clear income of about £500 a year, invested in a mortgage secured on a part of the hereditary lands, on which was seated an old hunting-lodge bought by a brewer.

With this portion of the property Graham parted very reluctantly. It was situated amid the most picturesque scenery on the estate, and the lodge itself was a remnant of the original residence of his ancestors before it had been abandoned for that which, built in the reign of Elizabeth, had been expanded into a Trentham-like palace by the last owner.

But Mr. King's argument reconciled him to the sacrifice. "I can manage," said the prudent adviser, "if you insist on it, to retain that remnant of the hereditary estate which you are so loath to part with. But how? by mortgaging it to an extent that will scarcely leave you £50 a-year net

from the rents. This is not all. Your mind will then be distracted from the large object of a career to the small object of retaining a few family acres; you will be constantly hampered by private anxieties and fears: you could do nothing for the benefit of those around you—could not repair a farmhouse for a better class of tenant—could not rebuild a labourer's dilapidated cottage. Give up an idea that might be very well for a man whose sole ambition was to remain a squire, however beggarly. Launch yourself into the larger world of metropolitan life with energies wholly unshackled, a mind wholly undisturbed, and secure of an income which, however modest, is equal to that of most young men who enter that world as your equals."

Graham was convinced, and yielded, though with a bitter pang. It is hard for a man whose fathers have lived on the soil to give up all trace of their whereabouts. But none saw in him any morbid consciousness of change of fortune, when, a year after his father's death, he reassumed his place in society. If before courted for his expectations, he was still courted for himself; by many of the great who had loved his father, perhaps even courted more.

He resigned the diplomatic career, not merely because the rise in that profession is slow, and in the intermediate steps the chances of distinction are slight and few, but more because he desired to cast his lot in the home country, and regarded the courts of other lands as exile.

It was not true, however, as Lemercier had stated on report, that he lived on his pen. Curbing all his old extravagant tastes, £500 a-year amply supplied his wants. But he had by his pen gained distinction, and created great belief in his abilities for a public career. He had written critical articles, read with much praise, in periodicals of authority, and had published one or two essays on political questions, which had created yet more sensation. It was only the graver literature, connected more or less with his ultimate object of a public career, in which he had thus evinced his talents of composition. Such writings were not of a nature to bring him much money, but they gave him a definite and solid station. In the old time, before the first Reform Bill, his reputation would have secured him at once a seat in Parliament; but the ancient

nurseries of statesmen are gone, and their place is not supplied.

He had been invited, however, to stand for more than one large and populous borough, with very fair prospects of success; and whatever the expense, Mr. King had offered to defray it. But Graham would not have incurred the latter obligation; and when he learned the pledges which his supporters would have exacted, he would not have stood if success had been certain and the cost nothing. "I cannot," he said to his friends, "go into the consideration of what is best for the country with my thoughts manacled; and I cannot be both representative and slave of the greatest ignorance of the greatest number. I bide my time, and meanwhile I prefer to write as I please, rather than vote as I don't please."

Three years went by, passed chiefly in England, partly in travel; and at the age of thirty, Graham Vane was still one of those of whom admirers say, "He will be a great man some day;" and detractors reply, "Some day seems a long way off."

The same fastidiousness which had operated against that entrance into Parliament to which his ambition not the less steadily adapted itself, had kept him free from the perils of wedlock. In his heart he yearned for love and domestic life, but he had hitherto met with no one who realised the ideal he had formed. With his person, his accomplishments, his connections, and his repute, he might have made many an advantageous marriage. But somehow or other the charm vanished from a fair face, if the shadow of a money-bag fell on it; on the other hand, his ambition occupied so large a share in his thoughts that he would have fled in time from the temptation of a marriage that would have overweighted him beyond the chance of rising. Added to all, he desired in a wife an intellect that, if not equal to his own, could become so by sympathy—a union of high culture and noble aspiration, and yet of loving womanly sweetness which a man seldom finds out of books; and when he does find it, perhaps it does not wear the sort of face that he fancies. Be that as it may, Graham was still unmarried and heart-whole.

And now a new change in his life befell him. Lady Janet died of a fever contracted in her habitual rounds of

charity among the houses of the poor. She had been to him as the most tender mother, and a lovelier soul than hers never alighted on the earth. His grief was intense; but what was her husband's?—one of those griefs that kill.

To the side of Richard King his Janet had been as the guardian angel. His love for her was almost worship—with her, every object in a life hitherto so active and useful seemed gone. He evinced no noisy passion of sorrow. He shut himself up, and refused to see even Graham. But after some weeks had passed, he admitted the clergyman in whom, on spiritual matters, he habitually confided, and seemed consoled by the visits; then he sent for his lawyer, and made his will; after which he allowed Graham to call on him daily, on the condition that there should be no reference to his loss. He spoke to the young man on other subjects, rather drawing him out about himself, sounding his opinion on various grave matters, watching his face while he questioned, as if seeking to dive into his heart, and sometimes pathetically sinking into silence, broken but by sighs. So it went on for a few more weeks; then he took the advice of his physician to seek change of air and scene. He went away alone, without even a servant, not leaving word where he had gone. After a little while he returned, more ailing, more broken than before. One morning he was found insensible—stricken by paralysis. He regained consciousness, and even for some days rallied strength. He might have recovered, but he seemed as if he tacitly refused to live. He expired at last, peacefully, in Graham's arms.

At the opening of his will it was found that he had left Graham his sole heir and executor. Deducting Government duties, legacies to servants, and donations to public charities, the sum thus bequeathed to his lost wife's nephew was two hundred and twenty thousand pounds.

With such a fortune, opening indeed was made for an ambition so long obstructed. But Graham affected no change in his mode of life; he still retained his modest bachelor's apartments—engaged no servants—bought no horses—in no way exceeded the income he had possessed before. He seemed, indeed, depressed rather than elated by the succession to a wealth which he had never anticipated.

Two children had been born from the marriage of Richard King; they had died young, it is true, but Lady Janet at the time of her own decease was not too advanced in years for the reasonable expectation of other offspring, and even after Richard King became a widower, he had given to Graham no hint of his testamentary dispositions. The young man was no blood-relation to him, and naturally supposed that such relations would become the heirs. But in truth the deceased seemed to have no blood-relations—none had ever been known to visit him—none raised a voice to question the justice of his will.

Lady Janet had been buried at Kensal Green; her husband's remains were placed in the same vault.

For days and days Graham went his way lonelily to the cemetery. He might be seen standing motionless by that tomb, with tears rolling down his cheeks; yet his was not a weak nature—not one of those that love indulgence of irremediable grief. On the contrary, people who did not know him well said "that he had more head than heart," and the character of his pursuits, as of his writings, was certainly not that of a sentimentalist. He had not thus visited the tomb till Richard King had been placed within it. Yet his love for his aunt was unspeakably greater than that which he could have felt for her husband. Was it, then, the husband that he so much more acutely mourned; or was there something that, since the husband's death, had deepened his reverence for the memory of her whom he had not only loved as a mother, but honoured as a saint?

These visits to the cemetery did not cease till Graham was confined to his bed by a very grave illness—the only one he had ever known. His physician said it was nervous fever, and occasioned by moral shock or excitement; it was attended with delirium. His recovery was slow, and when it was sufficiently completed he quitted England; and we find him now, with his mind composed, his strength restored, and his spirits braced, in that gay city of Paris, hiding, perhaps, some earnest purpose amid his participation in its holiday enjoyments.

He is now, as I have said, seated before his writing-table in deep thought. He takes up a letter which he had already glanced over hastily, and reperuses it with more care.

The letter is from his cousin, the Duke of Alton, who had succeeded a few years since to the family honours—an able man, with no small degree of information, an ardent politician, but of very rational and temperate opinions; too much occupied by the cares of a princely estate to covet office for himself; too sincere a patriot not to desire office for those to whose hands he thought the country might be most safely entrusted—an intimate friend of Graham's. The contents of the letter are these:—

My Dear Graham,—I trust that you will welcome the brilliant opening into public life which these lines are intended to announce to you. Vavasour has just been with me to say that he intends to resign his seat for the county when Parliament meets, and agreeing with me that there is no one so fit to succeed him as yourself, he suggests the keeping his intention secret until you have arranged your committee and are prepared to take the field. You cannot hope to escape a contest; but I have examined the Register, and the party has gained rather than lost since the last election, when Vavasour was so triumphantly returned. The expenses for this county, where there are so many out-voters to bring up, and so many agents to retain, are always large in comparison with some other counties; but that consideration is all in your favour, for it deters Squire Hunston, the only man who could beat you, from starting; and to your resources a thousand pounds more or less are a trifle not worth discussing. You know how difficult it is nowadays to find a seat for a man of moderate opinions like yours and mine. Our county would exactly suit you. The constituency is so evenly divided between the urban and rural populations, that its representative must fairly consult the interests of both. He can be neither an ultra-Tory nor a violent Radical. He is left to the enviable freedom, to which you say you aspire, of considering what is best for the country as a whole.

Do not lose so rare an opportunity. There is but one drawback to your triumphant candidature. It will be said that you have no longer an acre in the county in which the Vanes have been settled so long. That drawback can be removed. It is true that you can never hope to buy back the estates which you were compelled to sell at your father's

death—the old manufacturer gripes them too firmly to loosen his hold; and after all, even were your income double what it is, you would be overhoused in the vast pile in which your father buried so large a share of his fortune. But that beautiful old hunting-lodge, the *Stamm Schloss* of your family, with the adjacent farms, can be now repurchased very reasonably. The brewer who bought them is afflicted with an extravagant son, whom he placed in the —— Hussars, and will gladly sell the property for £5000 more than he gave: well worth the difference, as he has improved the farm-buildings and raised the rental. I think, in addition to the sum you have on mortgage, £23,000 will be accepted, and as a mere investment pay you nearly three per cent. But to you it is worth more than double the money; it once more identifies your ancient name with the county. You would be a greater personage with that moderate holding in the district in which your race took root, and on which your father's genius threw such a lustre, than you would be if you invested all your wealth in a county in which every squire and farmer would call you "the new man." Pray think over this most seriously, and instruct your solicitor to open negotiations with the brewer at once. But rather put yourself into the train, and come back to England straight to me. I will ask Vavasour to meet you. What news from Paris? Is the Emperor as ill as the papers insinuate? And is the revolutionary party gaining ground?—Your affectionate cousin,

ALTON.

As he put down this letter, Graham heaved a short impatient sigh.

"The old *Stamm Schloss*," he muttered—"a foot on the old soil once more! and an entrance into the great arena with hands unfettered. Is it possible!—is it—is it?"

At this moment the door bell of the apartment rang, and a servant whom Graham had hired at Paris as a *laquais de place* announced "*Ce Monsieur.*"

Graham hurried the letter into his portfolio, and said, "You mean the person to whom I am always at home?"

"The same, Monsieur."

"Admit him, of course."

There entered a wonderfully thin man, middle-aged,

clothed in black, his face cleanly shaven, his hair cut very short, with one of those faces which, to use a French expression, say "nothing." It was absolutely without expression—it had not even, despite its thinness, one salient feature. If you had found yourself anywhere seated next to that man, your eye would have passed him over as too insignificant to notice; if at a *café*, you would have gone on talking to your friend without lowering your voice. What mattered it whether a *bête* like that overheard or not? Had you been asked to guess his calling and station, you might have said, minutely observing the freshness of his clothes and the undeniable respectability of his *tout ensemble*, "He must be well off, and with no care for customers on his mind—a *ci-devant* chandler who has retired on a legacy."

Graham rose at the entrance of his visitor, motioned him courteously to a seat beside him, and waiting till the *laquais* had vanished, then asked "What news?"

"None, I fear, that will satisfy Monsieur. I have certainly hunted out, since I had last the honour to see you, no less than four ladies of the name of Duval, but only one of them took that name from her parents, and was also christened Louise."

"Ah—Louise!"

"Yes, the daughter of a perfumer, aged twenty-eight. She, therefore, is not the Louise you seek. Permit me to refer to your instructions." Here M. Renard took out a note-book, turned over the leaves, and resumed—"Wanted, Louise Duval, daughter of Auguste Duval, a French drawing-master, who lived for many years at Tours, removed to Paris in 1845, lived at No. 12, Rue de S—— at Paris for some years, but afterwards moved to a different *quartier* of the town, and died, 1848, in Rue L——, No. 39. Shortly after his death, his daughter Louise left that lodging, and could not be traced. In 1849 official documents reporting her death were forwarded from Munich to a person (a friend of yours, Monsieur). Death, of course, taken for granted; but nearly five years afterwards, this very person encountered the said Louise Duval, at Aix-la-Chapelle, and never heard nor saw more of her. *Demande* submitted, to find out said Louise Duval or any children of hers born in 1848-9; supposed in 1852-3 to have one child, a girl, between four and five years old. Is that right, Monsieur?"

"Quite right."

"And this is the whole information given to me. Monsieur on giving it asked me if I thought it desirable that he should commence inquiries at Aix-la-Chapelle, where Louise Duval was last seen by the person interested to discover her. I reply, No; pains thrown away. Aix-la-Chapelle is not a place where any Frenchwoman not settled there by marriage would remain. Nor does it seem probable that the said Duval would venture to select for her residence Munich, a city in which she had contrived to obtain certificates of her death. A Frenchwoman who has once known Paris always wants to get back to it; especially, Monsieur, if she has the beauty which you assign to this lady. I therefore suggested that our inquiries should commence in this capital. Monsieur agreed with me, and I did not grudge the time necessary for investigation."

"You were most obliging. Still I am beginning to be impatient if time is to be thrown away."

"Naturally. Permit me to return to my notes. Monsieur informs me that twenty-one years ago, in 1848, the Parisian police were instructed to find out this lady and failed, but gave hopes of discovering her through her relations. He asks me to refer to our archives; I tell him that is no use. However, in order to oblige him, I do so. No trace of such inquiry—it must have been, as Monsieur led me to suppose, a strictly private one, unconnected with crime or with politics; and as I have the honour to tell Monsieur, no record of such investigations is preserved in our office. Great scandal would there be, and injury to the peace of families, if we preserved the results of private inquiries intrusted to us—by absurdly jealous husbands, for instance. Honour, Monsieur, honour forbids it. Next I suggest to Monsieur that his simplest plan would be an advertisement in the French journals, stating, if I understand him right, that it is for the pecuniary interest of Madame or Mademoiselle Duval, daughter of Auguste Duval, *artiste en dessin*, to come forward. Monsieur objects to that."

"I object to it extremely; as I have told you, this is a strictly confidential inquiry, and an advertisement, which in all likelihood would be practically useless (it proved to

be so in a former inquiry), would not be resorted to unless all else failed, and even then with reluctance."

"Quite so. Accordingly, Monsieur delegates to me, who have been recommended to him as the best person he can employ in that department of our police which is not connected with crime or political *surveillance*, a task the most difficult. I have, through strictly private investigations, to discover the address and prove the identity of a lady bearing a name among the most common in France, and of whom nothing has been heard for fifteen years, and then at so migratory an *endroit* as Aix-la-Chapelle. You will not or cannot inform me if since that time the lady has changed her name by marriage."

"I have no reason to think that she has; and there are reasons against the supposition that she married after 1849."

"Permit me to observe that the more details of information Monsieur can give me, the easier my task of research will be."

"I have given you all the details I can, and, aware of the difficulty of tracing a person with a name so much the reverse of singular, I adopted your advice in our first interview, of asking some Parisian friend of mine, with a large acquaintance in the miscellaneous societies of your capital, to inform me of any ladies of that name whom he might chance to encounter; and he, like you, has lighted upon one or two, who, alas! resemble the right one in name, and nothing more."

"You will do wisely to keep him on the watch as well as myself. If it were but a murderess or a political incendiary, then you might trust exclusively to the enlightenment of our *corps*, but this seems an affair of sentiment, Monsieur. Sentiment is not in our way. Seek the trace of that in the haunts of pleasure."

M. Renard, having thus poetically delivered himself of that philosophical dogma, rose to depart.

Graham slipped into his hand a bank-note of sufficient value to justify the profound bow he received in return.

When M. Renard had gone, Graham heaved another impatient sigh, and said to himself, "No, it is not possible —at least not yet."

Then, compressing his lips as a man who forces himself

to something he dislikes, he dipped his pen into the inkstand, and wrote rapidly thus to his kinsman:—

My dear Cousin,—I lose not a post in replying to your kind and considerate letter. It is not in my power at present to return to England. I need not say how fondly I cherish the hope of representing the dear old county some day. If Vavasour could be induced to defer his resignation of the seat for another session, or at least for six or seven months, why then I might be free to avail myself of the opening; at present I am not. Meanwhile I am sorely tempted to buy back the old Lodge—probably the brewer would allow me to leave on mortgage the sum I myself have on the property, and a few additional thousands. I have reasons for not wishing to transfer at present much of the money now invested in the funds. I will consider this point, which probably does not press.

I reserve all Paris news till my next; and begging you to forgive so curt and unsatisfactory a reply to a letter so important that it excites me more than I like to own, believe me, your affectionate friend and cousin,

Graham.

CHAPTER II.

At about the same hour on the same day in which the Englishman held the conference with the Parisian detective just related, the Marquis de Rochebriant found himself by appointment in the *cabinet d'affaires* of his *avoué* M. Gandrin: that gentleman had hitherto not found time to give him a definitive opinion as to the case submitted to his judgment. The *avoué* received Alain with a kind of forced civility, in which the natural intelligence of the Marquis, despite his inexperience of life, discovered embarrassment.

"Monsieur le Marquis," said Gandrin, fidgeting among the papers on his bureau, "this is a very complicated business. I have given not only my best attention to it, but to your general interests. To be plain, your estate, though a fine one, is fearfully encumbered—fearfully—frightfully."

"Sir," said the Marquis, haughtily, "that is a fact which was never disguised from you."

"I do not say that it was, Marquis; but I scarcely realised the amount of the liabilities nor the nature of the property. It will be difficult—nay, I fear, impossible—to find any capitalist to advance a sum that will cover the mortgages at an interest less than you now pay. As for a Company to take the whole trouble off your hands, clear off the mortgages, manage the forests, develop the fisheries, guarantee you an adequate income, and at the end of twenty-one years or so render up to you or your heirs the free enjoyment of an estate thus improved, we must dismiss that prospect as a wild dream of my good friend M. Hébert's. People in the provinces do dream; in Paris everybody is wide awake."

"Monsieur," said the Marquis, with that inborn imperturbable loftiness of *sang froid* which has always in adverse circumstances characterised the French *noblesse*, "be kind enough to restore my papers. I see that you are not the

man for me. Allow me only to thank you, and inquire the amount of my debt for the trouble I have given."

"Perhaps you are quite justified in thinking I am not the man for you, Monsieur le Marquis; and your papers shall, if you decide on dismissing me, be returned to you this evening. But as to my accepting remuneration where I have rendered no service, I request M. le Marquis to put that out of the question. Considering myself, then, no longer your *avoué*, do not think I take too great a liberty in volunteering my counsel as a friend—or a friend at least to M. Hébert, if you do not vouchsafe my right so to address yourself."

M. Gandrin spoke with a certain dignity of voice and manner which touched and softened his listener.

"You make me your debtor far more than I pretend to repay," replied Alain. "Heaven knows I want a friend, and I will heed with gratitude and respect all your counsels in that character."

"Plainly and briefly, my advice is this: Monsieur Louvier is the principal mortgagee. He is among the six richest capitalists of Paris. He does not, therefore, want money, but, like most self-made men, he is very accessible to social vanities. He would be proud to think he had rendered a service to a Rochebriant. Approach him, either through me, or, far better, at once introduce yourself, and propose to consolidate all your other liabilities in one mortgage to him, at a rate of interest lower than that which is now paid to some of the small mortgagees. This would add considerably to your income and would carry out M. Hébert's advice."

"But does it not strike you, dear M. Gandrin, that such going cap-in-hand to one who has power over my fate, while I have none over his, would scarcely be consistent with my self-respect, not as Rochebriant only, but as Frenchman?"

"It does not strike me so in the least; at all events, I could make the proposal on your behalf, without compromising yourself, though I should be far more sanguine of success if you addressed M. Louvier in person."

"I should nevertheless prefer leaving it in your hands; but even for that I must take a few days to consider. Of all the mortgagees M. Louvier has been hitherto the

severest and most menacing, the one whom Hébert dreads the most; and should he become sole mortgagee, my whole estate would pass to him if, through any succession of bad seasons and failing tenants, the interest was not punctually paid."

"It could so pass to him now."

"No; for there have been years in which the other mortgagees, who are Bretons, and would be loath to ruin a Rochebriant, have been lenient and patient."

"If Louvier has not been equally so, it is only because he knew nothing of you, and your father no doubt had often sorely tasked his endurance. Come, suppose we manage to break the ice easily. Do me the honour to dine here to meet him; you will find that he is not an unpleasant man."

The Marquis hesitated, but the thought of the sharp and seemingly hopeless struggle for the retention of his ancestral home to which he would be doomed if he returned from Paris unsuccessful in his errand overmastered his pride. He felt as if that self-conquest was a duty he owed to the very tombs of his fathers. "I ought not to shrink from the face of a creditor," said he, smiling somewhat sadly, "and I accept the proposal you so graciously make."

"You do well, Marquis, and I will write at once to Louvier to ask him to give me his first disengaged day."

The Marquis had no sooner quitted the house than M. Gandrin opened a door at the side of his office, and a large portly man strode into the room—stride it was rather than step—firm, self-assured, arrogant, masterful.

"Well, *mon ami*," said this man, taking his stand at the hearth, as a king might take his stand in the hall of his vassal—"and what says our *petit muscadin?*"

"He is neither *petit* nor *muscadin*, Monsieur Louvier," replied Gandrin, peevishly; "and he will task your powers to get him thoroughly into your net. But I have persuaded him to meet you here. What day can you dine with me? I had better ask no one else."

"To-morrow I dine with my friend O——, to meet the chiefs of the Opposition," said Mons. Louvier, with a sort of careless rollicking pomposity. "Thursday with

Pereire—Saturday I entertain at home. Say Friday. Your hour?"

"Seven."

"Good! Show me those Rochebriant papers again; there is something I had forgotten to note. Never mind me. Go on with your work as if I were not here."

Louvier took up the papers, seated himself in an arm-chair by the fireplace, stretched out his legs, and read at his ease, but with a very rapid eye, as a practised lawyer skims through the technical forms of a case to fasten upon the marrow of it.

"Ah! as I thought. The farms could not pay even the interest on my present mortgage; the forests come in for that. If a contractor for the yearly sale of the woods was bankrupt and did not pay, how could I get my interest? Answer me that, Gandrin."

"Certainly you must run the risk of that chance."

"Of course the chance occurs, and then I foreclose *—I seize,—Rochebriant and its *seigneuries* are mine."

As he spoke he laughed, not sardonically—a jovial laugh—and opened wide, to reshut as in a vice, the strong iron hand which had doubtless closed over many a man's all.

"Thanks. On Friday, seven o'clock." He tossed the papers back on the bureau, nodded a royal nod, and strode forth imperiously as he had strided in.

* For the sake of the general reader, English technical words are here, as elsewhere, substituted as much as possible for French.

CHAPTER III.

MEANWHILE the young Marquis pursued his way thoughtfully through the streets, and entered the Champs Elysées. Since we first, nay, since we last saw him, he is strikingly improved in outward appearances. He has unconsciously acquired more of the easy grace of the Parisian in gait and bearing. You would no longer detect the Provincial—perhaps, however, because he is now dressed, though very simply, in habiliments that belong to the style of the day. Rarely among the loungers in the Champs Elysées could be seen a finer form, a comelier face, an air of more unmistakable distinction.

The eyes of many a passing fair one gazed on him, admiringly or coquettishly. But he was still so little the true Parisian that they got no smile, no look in return. He was wrapt in his own thoughts; was he thinking of M. Louvier?

He had nearly gained the entrance of the Bois de Boulogne, when he was accosted by a voice behind, and turning round saw his friend Lemercier arm-in-arm with Graham Vane.

"*Bonjour*, Alain," said Lemercier, hooking his disengaged arm into Rochebriant's. "I suspect we are going the same way."

Alain felt himself change countenance at this conjecture, and replied coldly, "I think not; I have got to the end of my walk, and shall turn back to Paris;" addressing himself to the Englishman, he said with formal politeness, "I regret not to have found you at home when I called some weeks ago, and no less so to have been out when you had the complaisance to return my visit."

"At all events," replied the Englishman, "let me not lose the opportunity of improving our acquaintance which now offers. It is true that our friend Lemercier, catching sight of me in the Rue de Rivoli, stopped his *coupé* and

carried me off for a promenade in the Bois. The fineness of the day tempted us to get out of his carriage as the Bois came in sight. But if you are going back to Paris I relinquish the Bois and offer myself as your companion."

Frederic (the name is so familiarly English that the reader might think me pedantic did I accentuate it as French) looked from one to the other of his two friends, half amused and half angry.

"And am I to be left alone to achieve a conquest, in which, if I succeed, I shall change into hate and envy the affection of my two best friends?—Be it so.

'Un véritable amant ne connait point d'amis.'"

"I do not comprehend your meaning," said the Marquis, with a compressed lip and a slight frown.

"Bah!" cried Frederic; "come, *franc jeu*—cards on the table—M. Gram Varn was going into the Bois at my suggestion on the chance of having another look at the pearl-coloured angel; and you, Rochebriant, can't deny that you were going into the Bois for the same object."

"One may pardon an *enfant terrible*," said the Englishman, laughing, "but an *ami terrible* should be sent to the galleys. Come, Marquis, let us walk back and submit to our fate. Even were the lady once more visible, we have no chance of being observed by the side of a Lovelace so accomplished and so audacious!"

"Adieu, then recreants—I go alone. Victory or death."

The Parisian beckoned his coachman, entered his carriage, and with a mocking grimace kissed his hand to the companions thus deserting or deserted.

Rochebriant touched the Englishman's arm, and said, "Do you think that Lemercier could be impertinent enough to accost that lady?"

"In the first place," returned the Englishman, "Lemercier himself tells me that the lady has for several weeks relinquished her walks in the Bois, and the probability is, therefore, that he will not have the opportunity to accost her. In the next place, it appears that when she did take her solitary walk, she did not stray far from her carriage, and was in reach of the protection of her *laquais* and coachman. But to speak honestly, do you, who know Le-

mercier better than I, take him to be a man who would commit an impertinence to a woman unless there were *viveurs* of his own sex to see him do it?"

Alain smiled. "No. Frederic's real nature is an admirable one, and if he ever do anything that he ought to be ashamed of, 'twill be from the pride of showing how finely he can do it. Such was his character at college, and such it still seems at Paris. But it is true that the lady has forsaken her former walk; at least I—I have not seen her since the day I first beheld her in company with Frederic. Yet—yet, pardon me, you were going to the Bois on the chance of seeing her. Perhaps she has changed the direction of her walk, and—and——"

The Marquis stopped short, stammering and confused.

The Englishman scanned his countenance with the rapid glance of a practised observer of men and things, and after a short pause, said: "If the lady has selected some other spot for her promenade, I am ignorant of it; nor have I even volunteered the chance of meeting with her, since I learned—first from Lemercier, and afterwards from others—that her destination is the stage. Let us talk frankly, Marquis. I am accustomed to take much exercise on foot, and the Bois is my favourite resort: one day I there found myself in the *allée* which the lady we speak of used to select for her promenade, and there saw her. Something in her face impressed me; how shall I describe the impression? Did you ever open a poem, a romance, in some style wholly new to you, and before you were quite certain whether or not its merits justified the interest which the novelty inspired, you were summoned away, or the book was taken out of your hands? If so, did you not feel an intellectual longing to have another glimpse of the book? That illustration describes my impression and I own that I twice again went to the same *allée*. The last time I only caught sight of the young lady as she was getting into her carriage. As she was then borne away, I perceived one of the custodians of the Bois; and learned on questioning him, that the lady was in the habit of walking always alone in the same *allée* at the same hour on most fine days, but that he did not know her name or address. A motive of curiosity—perhaps an idle one—then made me ask Lemercier, who boasts of knowing his Paris so intimately, if he

could inform me who the lady was. He undertook to ascertain."

"But," interposed the Marquis, "he did not ascertain who she was; he only ascertained where she lived, and that she and an elder companion were Italians,—whom he suspected, without sufficient ground, to be professional singers."

"True; but since then I ascertained more detailed particulars from two acquaintances of mine who happen to know her—M. Savarin, the distinguished writer, and Mrs. Morley, an accomplished and beautiful American lady, who is more than an acquaintance. I may boast the honour of ranking among her friends. As Savarin's villa is at A——, I asked him incidentally if he knew the fair neighbour whose face had so attracted me; and Mrs. Morley being present, and overhearing me, I learned from both what I now repeat to you."

"The young lady is a Signorina Cicogna—at Paris, exchanging (except among particular friends), as is not unusual, the outlandish designation of Signorina for the more conventional one of Mademoiselle. Her father was a member of the noble Milanese family of the same name, therefore the young lady is well born. Her father has been long dead; his widow married again an English gentleman settled in Italy, a scholar and antiquarian; his name was Selby. This gentleman, also dead, bequeathed the Signorina a small but sufficient competence. She is now an orphan, and residing with a companion, a Signora Venosta, who was once a singer of some repute at the Neapolitan Theatre, in the orchestra of which her husband was principal performer; but she relinquished the stage several years ago on becoming a widow, and gave lessons as a teacher. She has the character of being a scientific musician, and of unblemished private respectability. Subsequently she was induced to give up general teaching, and undertake the musical education and the social charge of the young lady with her. This girl is said to have early given promise of extraordinary excellence as a singer, and excited great interest among a coterie of literary critics and musical *cognoscenti*. She was to have come out at the Theatre of Milan a year or two ago, but her career has been suspended in consequence of ill-health, for which she

is now at Paris under the care of an English physician, who has made remarkable cures in all complaints of the respiratory organs. M***, the great composer, who knows her, says that in expression and feeling she has no living superior, perhaps no equal since Malibran."

"You seem, dear Monsieur, to have taken much pains to acquire this information."

"No great pains were necessary; but had they been I might have taken them, for, as I have owned to you, Mademoiselle Cicogna, while she was yet a mystery to me, strangely interested my thoughts or my fancies. That interest has now ceased. The world of actresses and singers lies apart from mine."

"Yet," said Alain, in a tone of voice that implied doubt, "if I understand Lemercier aright, you were going with him to the Bois on the chance of seeing again the lady in whom your interest has ceased."

"Lemercier's account was not strictly accurate. He stopped his carriage to speak to me on quite another subject, on which I have consulted him, and then proposed to take me on to the Bois. I assented; and it was not till we were in the carriage that he suggested the idea of seeing whether the pearly-robed lady had resumed her walk in the *allée*. You may judge how indifferent I was to that chance when I preferred turning back with you to going on with him. Between you and me, Marquis, to men of our age, who have the business of life before them, and feel that if there be aught in which *noblesse oblige* it is a severe devotion to noble objects, there is nothing more fatal to such devotion than allowing the heart to be blown hither and thither at every breeze of mere fancy, and dreaming ourselves into love with some fair creature whom we never could marry consistently with the career we have set before our ambition. I could not marry an actress—neither, I presume, could the Marquis de Rochebriant; and the thought of a courtship, which excluded the idea of marriage to a young orphan of name unblemished — of virtue unsuspected — would certainly not be compatible with 'devotion to noble objects.'"

Alain involuntarily bowed his head in assent to the proposition, and, it may be, in submission to an implied rebuke. The two men walked in silence for some minutes,

and Graham first spoke, changing altogether the subject of conversation.

"Lemercier tells me you decline going much into this world of Paris—the capital of capitals—which appears so irresistibly attractive to us foreigners."

"Possibly; but, to borrow your words, I have the business of life before me."

"Business is a good safeguard against the temptations to excess in pleasure, in which Paris abounds. But there is no business which does not admit of some holiday, and all business necessitates commerce with mankind. *A propos*, I was the other evening at the Duchesse de Tarascon's—a brilliant assembly, filled with ministers, senators, and courtiers. I heard your name mentioned."

"Mine?"

"Yes; Duplessis, the rising financier—who rather to my surprise was not only present among these official and decorated celebrities, but apparently quite at home among them—asked the Duchess if she had not seen you since your arrival at Paris. She replied, 'No; that though you were among her nearest connections, you had not called on her;' and bade Duplessis tell you that you were a *monstre* for not doing so. Whether or not Duplessis will take that liberty I know not; but you must pardon me if I do. She is a very charming woman, full of talent; and that stream of the world which reflects the stars, with all their mythical influences on fortune, flows through her *salons*."

"I am not born under those stars. I am a Legitimist."

"I did not forget your political creed; but in England the leaders of opposition attend the *salons* of the Prime Minister. A man is not supposed to compromise his opinions because he exchanges social courtesies with those to whom his opinions are hostile. Pray excuse me if I am indiscreet;—I speak as a traveller who asks for information—but do the Legitimists really believe that they best serve their cause by declining any mode of competing with its opponents? Would there not be a fairer chance for the ultimate victory of their principles if they made their talents and energies individually prominent—if they were known as skilful generals, practical statesmen, eminent diplomatists, brilliant writers?—could they combine—not to sulk and exclude themselves from the great battle-field

of the world—but in their several ways to render themselves of such use to their country that some day or other, in one of those revolutionary crises to which France, alas! must long be subjected, they would find themselves able to turn the scale of undecided councils and conflicting jealousies?"

"Monsieur, we hope for the day when the Divine Disposer of events will strike into the hearts of our fickle and erring countrymen the conviction that there will be no settled repose for France save under the sceptre of her rightful kings. But meanwhile we are—I see it more clearly since I have quitted Bretagne—we are a hopeless minority."

"Does not history tell us that the great changes of the world have been wrought by minorities? but on the one condition that the minorities shall not be hopeless? It is almost the other day that the Bonapartists were in a minority that their adversaries called hopeless, and the majority for the Emperor is now so preponderant that I tremble for his safety. When a majority becomes so vast that intellect disappears in the crowd, the date of its destruction commences; for by the law of reaction the minority is installed against it. It is the nature of things that minorities are always more intellectual than multitudes, and intellect is ever at work in sapping numerical force. What your party want is hope; because without hope there is no energy. I remember hearing my father say that when he met the Count de Chambord at Ems, that illustrious personage delivered himself of a *belle phrase* much admired by his partisans. The Emperor was then President of the Republic, in a very doubtful and dangerous position. France seemed on the verge of another convulsion. A certain distinguished politician recommended the Count de Chambord to hold himself ready to enter at once as a candidate for the throne. And the Count, with a benignant smile on his handsome face answered, 'All wrecks come to the shore—the shore does not go to the wrecks.'"

"Beautifully said!" exclaimed the Marquis.

"Not if *Le beau est toujours le vrai.* My father, no inexperienced nor unwise politician, in repeating the royal words, remarked: 'The fallacy of the Count's argument is

in its metaphor. A man is not a shore. Do you not think that the seamen on board the wrecks would be more grateful to him who did not complacently compare himself to a shore, but considered himself a human being like themselves, and risked his own life in a boat, even though it were a cockle-shell, in the chance of saving theirs?'"

Alain de Rochebriant was a brave man, with that intense sentiment of patriotism which characterises Frenchmen of every rank and persuasion, unless they belong to the Internationalists; and without pausing to consider, he cried, "Your father was right."

The Englishman resumed: "Need I say, my dear Marquis, that I am not a Legitimist? I am not an Imperialist, neither am I an Orleanist nor a Republican. Between all those political divisions it is for Frenchmen to make their choice, and for Englishmen to accept for France that government which France has established. I view things here as a simple observer. But it strikes me that if I were a Frenchman in your position, I should think myself unworthy my ancestors if I consented to be an insignificant looker-on."

"You are not in my position," said the Marquis, half mournfully, half haughtily, "and you can scarcely judge of it even in imagination."

"I need not much task my imagination; I judge of it by analogy. I was very much in your position when I entered upon what I venture to call my career; and it is the curious similarity between us in circumstances, that made me wish for your friendship when that similarity was made known to me by Lemercier, who is not less garrulous than the true Parisian usually is. Permit me to say that, like you, I was reared in some pride of no inglorious ancestry. I was reared also in the expectation of great wealth. Those expectations were not realized: my father had the fault of noble natures—generosity pushed to imprudence: he died poor and in debt. You retain the home of your ancestors; I had to resign mine."

The Marquis had felt deeply interested in this narrative, and as Graham now paused, took his hand and pressed it.

"One of our most eminent personages said to me about that time, 'Whatever a clever man of your age determines to do or to be, the odds are twenty to one that he has only to

live on in order to do or to be it.' Don't you think he spoke truly? I think so."

"I scarcely know what to think," said Rochebriant; "I feel as if you had given me so rough a shake when I was in the midst of a dull dream, that I am not yet quite sure whether I am asleep or awake."

Just as he said this, and towards the Paris end of the Champs Elysées, there was a halt, a sensation among the loungers round them: many of them uncovered in salute.

A man on the younger side of middle age, somewhat inclined to corpulence, with a very striking countenance, was riding slowly by. He returned the salutations he received with the careless dignity of a Personage accustomed to respect, and then reined in his horse by the side of a barouche, and exchanged some words with a portly gentleman who was its sole occupant. The loungers, still halting, seemed to contemplate this parley—between him on horseback and him in the carriage—with very eager interest. Some put their hands behind their ears and pressed forward, as if trying to overhear what was said.

"I wonder," quoth Graham, "whether, with all his cleverness, the Prince has in any way decided what *he* means to do or to be."

"The Prince!" said Rochebriant, rousing himself from reverie; "what Prince?"

"Do you not recognise him by his wonderful likeness to the first Napoleon—him on horseback talking to Louvier, the great financier."

"Is that stout *bourgeois* in the carriage Louvier—my mortgagee, Louvier?"

"Your mortgagee, my dear Marquis? Well, he is rich enough to be a very lenient one upon pay-day."

"*Hein!*—I doubt his leniency," said Alain. "I have promised my *avoué* to meet him at dinner. Do you think I did wrong?"

"Wrong! of course not; he is likely to overwhelm you with civilities. Pray don't refuse if he gives you an invitation to his *soirée* next Saturday—I am going to it. One meets there the notabilities most interesting to study—artists, authors, politicians, especially those who call themselves Republicans. He and the Prince agree in one thing—viz., the cordial reception they give to the men who

would destroy the state of things upon which Prince and financier both thrive. Hillo! here comes Lemercier on return from the Bois."

Lemercier's *coupé* stopped beside the footpath. "What tidings of the *Belle Inconnue?*" asked the Englishman.

"None; she was not there. But I am rewarded—such an adventure—a dame of the *haute volée*—I believe she is a duchess. She was walking with a lap-dog, a pure Pomeranian. A strange poodle flew at the Pomeranian, I drove off the poodle, rescued the Pomeranian, received the most gracious thanks, the sweetest smile:—*femme superbe*, middle-aged. I prefer women of forty. *Au revoir*, I am due at the club."

Alain felt a sensation of relief that Lemercier had not seen the lady in the pearl-coloured dress, and quitted the Englishman with a lightened heart.

CHAPTER IV.

"*Piccola, piccola! com' è cortese!* another invitation from M. Louvier for next Saturday—*conversazione.*" This was said in Italian by an elderly lady bursting noisily into the room—elderly, yet with a youthful expression of face, owing perhaps to a pair of very vivacious black eyes. She was dressed, after a somewhat slatternly fashion, in a wrapper of crimson merino much the worse for wear, a blue handkerchief twisted turban-like round her head, and her feet encased in list slippers. The person to whom she addressed herself was a young lady with dark hair, which, despite its evident redundance, was restrained into smooth glossy braids over the forehead, and at the crown of the small graceful head into the simple knot which Horace has described as "Spartan." Her dress contrasted the speaker's by as exquisite neatness. We have seen her before as the lady in the pearl-coloured robe, but seen now at home she looks much younger. She was one of those whom, encountered in the streets or in society, one might guess to be married—probably a young bride; for thus seen there was about her an air of dignity and of self-possession which suits well with the ideal of chaste youthful matronage; and in the expression of the face there was a pensive thoughtfulness beyond her years. But as she now sat by the open window arranging flowers in a glass bowl, a book lying open on her lap, you would never have said, "What a handsome woman!" you would have said, "What a charming girl!" All about her was maidenly, innocent, and fresh. The dignity of her bearing was lost in household ease, the pensiveness of her expression in an untroubled serene sweetness.

Perhaps many of my readers may have known friends engaged in some absorbing cause of thought, and who are in the habit when they go out, especially if on solitary walks, to take that cause of thought with them. The

friend may be an orator meditating his speech, a poet his verses, a lawyer a difficult case, a physician an intricate malady. If you have such a friend, and you observe him thus away from his home, his face will seem to you older and graver. He is absorbed in the care that weighs on him. When you see him in a holiday moment at his own fireside, the care is thrown aside; perhaps he mastered while abroad the difficulty that had troubled him; he is cheerful, pleasant, sunny. This appears to be very much the case with persons of genius. When in their own houses we usually find them very playful and childlike. Most persons of real genius, whatever they may seem out of doors, are very sweet-tempered at home, and sweet temper is sympathising and genial in the intercourse of private life. Certainly, observing this girl as she now bends over the flowers, it would be difficult to believe her to be the Isaura Cicogna whose letters to Madame de Grantmesnil exhibit the doubts and struggles of an unquiet, discontented, aspiring mind. Only in one or two passages in those letters would you have guessed at the writer in the girl as we now see her.

It is in those passages where she expresses her love of harmony, and her repugnance to contest—those were characteristics you might have read in her face.

Certainly the girl is very lovely: what long dark eyelashes—what soft, tender, dark-blue eyes! now that she looks up and smiles, what a bewitching smile it is!—by what sudden play of rippling dimples the smile is enlivened and redoubled! Do you notice one feature? in very showy beauties it is seldom noticed; but I, being in my way a physiognomist, consider that it is always worth heeding as an index of character. It is the ear. Remark how delicately it is formed in her—none of that heaviness of lobe which is a sure sign of sluggish intellect and coarse perception. Hers is the artist's ear. Note next those hands—how beautifully shaped! small, but not doll-like hands—ready and nimble, firm and nervous hands, that could work for a helpmate. By no means very white, still less red, but somewhat embrowned as by the sun, such as you may see in girls reared in southern climates, and in her perhaps betokening an impulsive character which had not accustomed itself, when at sport in the open air, to the thraldom of

gloves—very impulsive people even in cold climates seldom do.

In conveying to us by a few bold strokes an idea of the sensitive, quick-moved, warm-blooded Henry II., the most impulsive of the Plantagenets, his contemporary chronicler tells us that rather than imprison those active hands of his, even in hawking-gloves, he would suffer his falcon to fix its sharp claws into his wrist. No doubt there is a difference as to what is befitting between a burly bellicose creature like Henry II. and a delicate young lady like Isaura Cicogna; and one would not wish to see those dainty wrists of hers seamed and scarred by a falcon's claws. But a girl may not be less exquisitely feminine for slight heed of artificial prettinesses. Isaura had no need of pale bloodless hands to seem one of Nature's highest grade of gentlewomen even to the most fastidious eyes. About her there was a charm apart from her mere beauty, and often disturbed instead of heightened by her mere intellect: it consisted in a combination of exquisite artistic refinement, and of a generosity of character by which refinement was animated into vigour and warmth.

The room, which was devoted exclusively to Isaura, had in it much that spoke of the occupant. That room, when first taken furnished, had a good deal of the comfortless showiness which belongs to ordinary furnished apartments in France, especially in the Parisian suburbs, chiefly let for the summer—thin limp muslin curtains that decline to draw, stiff mahogany chairs covered with yellow Utrecht velvet, a tall *secrétaire* in a dark corner, an oval buhl-table set in tawdry ormolu, islanded in the centre of a poor but gaudy Scotch carpet, and but one other table of dull walnut-wood, standing clothless before a sofa to match the chairs; the eternal ormolu clock flanked by the two eternal ormolu candelabra on the dreary mantelpiece. Some of this garniture had been removed, others softened into cheeriness and comfort. The room somehow or other,—thanks partly to a very moderate expenditure in pretty twills with pretty borders, gracefully simple table-coyers, with one or two additional small tables and easy-chairs, two simple vases filled with flowers—thanks still more to a nameless skill in re-arrangement, and the disposal of the slight nick-nacks and well-bound volumes, which, even in

travelling, women who have cultivated the pleasures of taste carry about with them,—had been coaxed into that quiet harmony, that tone of consistent subdued colour, which corresponded with the characteristics of the inmate. Most people might have been puzzled where to place the piano, a semi-grand, so as not to take up too much space in the little room; but where it was placed it seemed so at home that you might have supposed the room had been built for it.

There are two kinds of neatness—one is too evident, and makes everything about it seem trite and cold and stiff, and another kind of neatness disappears from our sight in a satisfied sense of completeness—like some exquisite, simple, finished style of writing—an Addison's or a St. Pierre's.

This last sort of neatness belonged to Isaura, and brought to mind the well-known line of Catullus when on recrossing his threshold he invokes its welcome—a line thus not inelegantly translated by Leigh Hunt—

"Smile every dimple on the cheek of Home."

I entreat the reader's pardon for this long descriptive digression; but Isaura is one of those characters which are called many-sided, and therefore not very easy to comprehend. She gives us one side of her character in her correspondence with Madame de Grantmesnil, and another side of it in her own home with her Italian companion—half nurse, half *chaperon*.

"Monsieur Louvier is indeed very courteous," said Isaura, looking up from the flowers with the dimpled smile we have noticed. "But I think, *Madre*, that we should do well to stay at home on Saturday—not peacefully, for I owe you your revenge at *Euchre*."

"You can't mean it, *Piccola!*" exclaimed the Signora in evident consternation. "Stay at home!—why stay at home? *Euchre* is very well when there is nothing else to do.; but change is pleasant—*le bon Dieu* likes it—

'Ne caldo ne gelo
Resta mai in cielo.

And such beautiful ices one gets at M. Louvier's. Did you taste the Pistachio ice? What fine rooms, and so well lit

up!—I adore light. And the ladies so beautifully dressed—one sees the fashions. Stay at home—play at *Euchre* indeed! *Piccola*, you cannot be so cruel to yourself—you are young."

"But, dear *Madre*, just consider—we are invited because we are considered professional singers: your reputation as such is of course established—mine is not; but still I shall be asked to sing as I was asked before; and you know Dr. C—— forbids me to do so except to a very small audience; and it is so ungracious always to say 'No;' and besides, did you not yourself say, when we came away last time from M. Louvier's, that it was very dull—that you knew nobody—and that the ladies had such superb toilettes that you felt mortified—and——"

"*Zitto! zitto!* you talk idly, *Piccola*—very idly. I was mortified then in my old black Lyons silk; but have I not bought since then my beautiful Greek jacket—scarlet and gold lace? and why should I buy it if I am not to show it?"

"But, dear *Madre*, the jacket is certainly very handsome, and will make an effect in a little dinner at the Savarins or Mrs. Morley's. But in a great formal reception like M. Louvier's will it not look——"

"Splendid!" interrupted the Signora.

"But *singolare*."

"So much the better; did not that great English lady wear such a jacket, and did not every one admire her—*più tosto invidia che compassione?*"

Isaura sighed. Now the jacket of the Signora was a subject of disquietude to her friend. It so happened that a young English lady of the highest rank and the rarest beauty had appeared at M. Louvier's, and indeed generally, in the *beau monde* of Paris, in a Greek jacket that became her very much. That jacket had fascinated, at M. Louvier's, the eyes of the Signora. But of this Isaura was unaware. The Signora, on returning home from M. Louvier's, had certainly lamented much over the *mesquin* appearance of her old-fashioned Italian habiliments compared with the brilliant toilette of the gay Parisiennes; and Isaura—quite woman enough to sympathise with woman in such womanly vanities—proposed the next day to go with the Signora to one of the principal *couturières* of Paris, and adapt the Sig-

nora's costume to the fashions of the place. But the Signora having predetermined on a Greek jacket, and knowing by instinct that Isaura would be disposed to thwart that splendid predilection, had artfully suggested that it would be better to go to the *couturière* with Madame Savarin, as being a more experienced adviser,—and the *coupé* only held two.

As Madame Savarin was about the same age as the Signora, and dressed as became her years, and in excellent taste, Isaura thought this an admirable suggestion; and pressing into her *chaperon's* hand a *billet de banque* sufficient to re-equip her *cap-à-pie*, dismissed the subject from her mind. But the Signora was much too cunning to submit her passion for the Greek jacket to the discouraging comments of Madame Savarin. Monopolising the *coupé*, she became absolute mistress of the situation. She went to no fashionable *couturières*. She went to a *magasin* that she had seen advertised in the *Petites Affiches* as supplying superb costumes for fancy-balls and amateur performers in private theatricals. She returned home triumphant, with a jacket still more dazzling to the eye than that of the English lady.

When Isaura first beheld it, she drew back in a sort of superstitious terror, as of a comet or other blazing portent.

"*Cosa stupenda!*"—(stupendous thing!) She might well be dismayed when the Signora proposed to appear thus attired in M. Louvier's *salon*. What might be admired as coquetry of dress in a young beauty of rank so great that even a vulgarity in her would be called *distinguée*, was certainly an audacious challenge of ridicule in the elderly *ci-devant* music-teacher.

But how could Isaura, how can any one of common humanity, say to a woman resolved upon wearing a certain dress, "You are not young and handsome enough for that?"—Isaura could only murmur, "For many reasons I would rather stay at home, dear *Madre*."

"Ah! I see you are ashamed of me," said the Signora, in softened tones: "very natural. When the nightingale sings no more, she is only an ugly brown bird:" and therewith the Signora Venosta seated herself submissively, and began to cry.

On this Isaura sprang up, wound her arms round the

Signora's neck, soothed her with coaxing, kissed and petted her, and ended by saying, "Of course we will go;" and, "but let me choose you another dress—a dark-green velvet trimmed with blonde—blonde becomes you so well."

"No, no—I hate green velvet; anybody can wear that. *Piccola*, I am not clever like thee; I cannot amuse myself like thee with books. I am in a foreign land. I have a poor head, but I have a big heart" (another burst of tears); "and that big heart is set on my beautiful Greek jacket."

"Dearest *Madre*," said Isaura, half weeping too, "forgive me; you are right. The Greek jacket is splendid; I shall be so pleased to see you wear it. Poor *Madre*—so pleased to think that in the foreign land you are not without something that pleases *you*."

CHAPTER V.

CONFORMABLY with his engagement to meet M. Louvier, Alain found himself on the day and at the hour named in M. Gandrin's *salon*. On this occasion Madame Gandrin did not appear. Her husband was accustomed to give *dîners d'hommes*. The great man had not yet arrived. "I think, Marquis," said M. Gandrin, "that you will not regret having followed my advice: my representations have disposed Louvier to regard you with much favour, and he is certainly flattered by being permitted to make your personal acquaintance."

The *avoué* had scarcely finished this little speech, when M. Louvier was announced. He entered with a beaming smile, which did not detract from his imposing presence. His flatterers had told him that he had a look of Louis Philippe; therefore he had sought to imitate the dress and the *bonhomie* of that monarch of the middle class. He wore a wig, elaborately piled up, and shaped his whiskers in royal harmony with the royal wig. Above all, he studied that social frankness of manner with which the able sovereign dispelled awe of his presence or dread of his astuteness. Decidedly he was a man very pleasant to converse and to deal with—so long as there seemed to him something to gain and nothing to lose by being pleasant. He returned Alain's bow by a cordial offer of both expansive hands, into the grasp of which the hands of the aristocrat utterly disappeared. "Charmed to make your acquaintance, Marquis—still more charmed if you will let me be useful during your *séjour* at Paris. *Ma foi*, excuse my bluntness, but you are a *fort beau garçon*. Monsieur your father was a handsome man, but you beat him hollow Gandrin, my friend, would not you and I give half our fortunes for one year of this fine fellow's youth spent at Paris? *Peste!* what love-letters we should have, with no need to buy them by *billets de banque!*" Thus he ran on, much to Alain's confusion, till dinner was announced.

Then there was something *grandiose* in the frank *bourgeois* style wherewith he expanded his napkin and twisted one end into his waistcoat—it was so manly a renunciation of the fashions which a man so *répandu* in all circles might be supposed to follow;—as if he were both too great and too much in earnest for such frivolities. He was evidently a sincere *bon vivant*, and M. Gandrin had no less evidently taken all requisite pains to gratify his taste. The Montrachet served with the oysters was of precious vintage. That *vin de madère* which accompanied the *potage a là bisque* would have contented an American. And how radiant became Louvier's face, when amongst the *entrées* he came upon *laitances de carpes!* "The best thing in the world," he cried, "and one gets it so seldom since the old Rocher de Cancale has lost its renown. At private houses, what does one get now?—*blanc de poulet*—flavourless trash. After all, Gandrin, when we lose the love-letters, it is some consolation that *laitances de carpes* and *sautés de foie gras* are still left to fill up the void in our hearts. Marquis, heed my counsel; cultivate betimes the taste for the table; that and whist are the solé resources of declining years. You never met my old friend Talleyrand—ah, no! he was long before your time. He cultivated both, but he made two mistakes. No man's intellect is perfect on all sides. He confined himself to one meal a-day, and he never learned to play well at whist. Avoid his errors, my young friend—avoid them. Gandrin, I guess this pine-apple is English—it is superb."

"You are right—a present from the Marquis of H——."

"Ah! instead of a fee, I wager. The Marquis gives nothing for nothing, dear man! Droll people the English. You have never visited England, I presume, *cher* Rochebriant?"

The affable financier had already made vast progress in familiarity with his silent fellow-guest.

When the dinner was over and the three men had re-entered the *salon* for coffee and liqueurs, Gandrin left Louvier and Alain alone, saying he was going to his cabinet for cigars which he could recommend. Then Louvier, lightly patting the Marquis on the shoulder, said with what the French call *effusion*,—"My dear Rochebriant, your father and I did not quite understand each other. He

took a tone of *grand seigneur* that sometimes wounded me; and I in turn was perhaps too rude in asserting my rights —as creditor, shall I say?—no, as fellow-citizen; and Frenchmen are so vain, so over-susceptible—fire up at a word—take offence when none is meant. We two, my dear boy, should be superior to such national foibles. *Bref*—I have a mortgage on your lands. Why should that thought mar our friendship? At my age, though I am not yet old, one is flattered if the young like us—pleased if we can oblige them, and remove from their career any little obstacle in its way. Gandrin tells me you wish to consolidate all the charges on your estate into one on a lower rate of interest. Is it so?"

"I am so advised," said the Marquis.

"And very rightly advised; come and talk with me about it some day next week. I hope to have a large sum of money set free in a few days. Of course, mortgages on land don't pay like speculations at the Bourse; but I am rich enough to please myself. We will see—we will see."

Here Gandrin returned with the cigars; but Alain at that time never smoked, and Louvier excused himself, with a laugh and a sly wink, on the plea that he was going to pay his respects—as doubtless that *joli garçon* was going to do, likewise—to a *belle dame* who did not reckon the smell of tobacco among the perfumes of Houbigant or Arabia.

"Meanwhile," added Louvier, turning to Gandrin, "I have something to say to you on business about the contract for that new street of mine. No hurry—after our young friend has gone to his 'assignation.'"

Alain could not misinterpret the hint; and in a few moments took leave of his host more surprised than disappointed that the financier had not invited him, as Graham had assumed he would, to his *soirée* the following evening.

When Alain was gone, Louvier's jovial manner disappeared also, and became bluffly rude rather than bluntly cordial.

"Gandrin, what did you mean by saying that that young man was no *muscadin*! *Muscadin*—*aristocrate*—offensive from top to toe."

"You amaze me—you seemed to take to him so cordially."

"And pray, were you too blind to remark with what cold reserve he responded to my condescensions? How he winced when I called him Rochebriant! how he coloured when I called him 'dear boy!' These aristocrats think we ought to thank them on our knees when they take our money, and"—here Louvier's face darkened—"seduce our women."

"Monsieur Louvier, in all France I do not know a greater aristocrat than yourself."

I don't know whether M. Gandrin meant that speech as a compliment, but M. Louvier took it as such—laughed complacently and rubbed his hands. "Ay, ay, *millionnaires* are the real aristocrats, for they have power, as my *beau Marquis* will soon find. I must bid you good-night. Of course I shall see Madame Gandrin and yourself to-morrow. Prepare for a motley gathering—lots of democrats and foreigners, with artists and authors, and such creatures."

"Is that the reason why you did not invite the Marquis?"

"To be sure; I would not shock so pure a Legitimist by contact with the sons of the people, and make him still colder to myself. No; when he comes to my house he shall meet lions and *viveurs* of the *haut ton*, who will play into my hands by teaching him how to ruin himself in the quickest manner and in the *genre Régence*. *Bon soir, mon vieux.*"

CHAPTER VI.

THE next night Graham in vain looked round for Alain in M. Louvier's *salons*, and missed his high-bred mien and melancholy countenance. M. Louvier had been for some four years a childless widower, but his receptions were not the less numerously attended, nor his establishment less magnificently *monté* for the absence of a presiding lady: very much the contrary; it was noticeable how much he had increased his status and prestige as a social personage since the death of his unlamented spouse.

To say truth, she had been rather a heavy drag on his triumphal car. She had been the heiress of a man who had amassed a great deal of money; not in the higher walks of commerce, but in a retail trade.

Louvier himself was the son of a rich money-lender; he had entered life with an ample fortune and an intense desire to be admitted into those more brilliant circles in which fortune can be dissipated with *éclat*. He might not have attained this object but for the friendly countenance of a young noble who was then

"The glass of fashion and the mould of form."

But this young noble, of whom later we shall hear more, came suddenly to grief; and when the money-lender's son lost that potent protector, the dandies, previously so civil, showed him a very cold shoulder.

Louvier then became an ardent democrat, and recruited the fortune he had impaired by the aforesaid marriage, launched into colossal speculations, and became enormously rich. His aspirations for social rank now revived, but his wife sadly interfered with them. She was thrifty by nature; sympathised little with her husband's genius for accumulation; always said he would end in a hospital; hated Republicans; despised authors and artists; and by the ladies of the *beau monde* was pronounced common and vulgar.

So long as she lived, it was impossible for Louvier to realise his ambition of having one of the *salons* which at Paris establish celebrity and position. He could not then command those advantages of wealth which he especially coveted. He was eminently successful in doing this now. As soon as she was safe in Père la Chaise, he enlarged his hotel by the purchase and annexation of an adjoining house; redecorated and refurnished it, and in this task displayed, it must be said to his credit, or to that of the administrators he selected for the purpose, a nobleness of taste rarely exhibited now-a-days. His collection of pictures was not large, and consisted exclusively of the French school, ancient and modern, for in all things Louvier affected the patriot. But each of those pictures was a gem; such Watteaus, such Greuzes, such landscapes by Patel, and, above all, such masterpieces by Ingrès, Horace Vernet, and Delaroche, were worth all the doubtful originals of Flemish and Italian art which make the ordinary boast of private collectors.

These pictures occupied two rooms of moderate size, built for their reception, and lighted from above. The great *salon* to which they led contained treasures scarcely less precious; the walls were covered with the richest silks which the looms of Lyons could produce. Every piece of furniture here was a work of art in its way: console-tables of Florentine mosaic, inlaid with pearl and lapis-lazuli; cabinets in which the exquisite designs of the *renaissance* were carved in ebony; colossal vases of Russian malachite, but wrought by French artists. The very nick-nacks scattered carelessly about the room might have been admired in the cabinets of the Palazzo Pitti. Beyond this room lay the *salle de danse*, its ceiling painted by * * *, supported by white marble columns, the glazed balcony and the angles of the room filled with tiers of exotics. In the dining-room, on the same floor, on the other side of the landing-place, were stored in glazed buffets, not only vessels and salvers of plate, silver and gold, but, more costly still, matchless specimens of Sèvres and Limoges, and mediæval varieties of Venetian glass. On the ground-floor, which opened on the lawn of a large garden, Louvier had his suite of private apartments, furnished, as he said, "simply, according to English notions of comfort." Englishmen would have said,

"according to French notions of luxury." Enough of these details, which a writer cannot give without feeling himself somewhat vulgarised in doing so, but without a loose general idea of which a reader would not have an accurate conception of something not vulgar—of something grave, historical, possibly tragical, the existence of a Parisian *millionnaire* at the date of this narrative.

The evidence of wealth was everywhere manifest at M. Louvier's, but it was everywhere refined by an equal evidence of taste. The apartments devoted to hospitality ministered to the delighted study of artists, to whom free access was given, and of whom two or three might be seen daily in the "show-rooms," copying pictures or taking sketches of rare articles of furniture or effects for palatian interiors.

Among the things which rich English visitors of Paris most coveted to see was M. Louvier's hotel; and few among the richest left it without a sigh of envy and despair. Only in such London houses as belong to a Sutherland or a Holford could our metropolis exhibit a splendour as opulent and a taste as refined.

M. Louvier had his set evenings for popular assemblies. At these were entertained the Liberals of every shade, from *tricolor* to *rouge*, with the artists and writers most in vogue, *pêle-mêle* with decorated diplomatists, ex-ministers, Orleanists, and Republicans, distinguished foreigners, plutocrats of the Bourse, and lions male and female from the arid nurse of that race, the Chaussée d'Antin. Of his more select reunions something will be said later.

"And how does this poor Paris metamorphosed please Monsieur Vane?" asked a Frenchman with a handsome intelligent countenance, very carefully dressed, though in a somewhat bygone fashion, and carrying off his tenth lustrum with an air too sprightly to evince any sense of the weight.

This gentleman, the Vicomte de Brézé, was of good birth, and had a legitimate right to his title of Vicomte, which is more than can be said of many vicomtes one meets at Paris. He had no other property, however, than a principal share in an influential journal, to which he was a lively and sparkling contributor. In his youth, under the reign of Louis Philippe, he had been a chief among literary

exquisites, and Balzac was said to have taken him more than once as his model for those brilliant young *vauriens* who figure in the great novelist's comedy of "Human Life." The Vicomte's fashion expired with the Orleanist dynasty.

"Is it possible, my dear Vicomte," answered Graham, "not to be pleased with a capital so marvellously embellished?"

"Embellished it may be to foreign eyes," said the Vicomte, sighing, "but not improved to the taste of a Parisian like me. I miss the dear Paris of old—the streets associated with my *beaux jours* are no more. Is there not something drearily monotonous in these interminable perspectives? How frightfully the way lengthens before one's eyes! In the twists and curves of the old Paris one was relieved from the pain of seeing how far one had to go from one spot to another—each tortuous street had a separate idiosyncrasy; what picturesque diversities, what interesting recollections—all swept away! *Mon Dieu!* and what for? Miles of florid *façades* staring and glaring at one with goggle-eyed pitiless windows. House-rents trebled; and the consciousness that, if you venture to grumble, underground railways, like concealed volcanoes, can burst forth on you at any moment with an eruption of bayonets and muskets. This *maudit empire* seeks to keep its hold on France much as a *grand seigneur* seeks to enchain a nymph of the ballet, tricks her out in finery and baubles, and insures her infidelity the moment he fails to satisfy her whims."

"Vicomte," answered Graham, "I have had the honour to know you since I was a small boy at a preparatory school home for the holidays, and you were a guest at my father's country-house. You were then *fêté* as one of the most promising writers among the young men of the day, especially favoured by the princes of the reigning family. I shall never forget the impression made on me by your brilliant appearance and your no less brilliant talk."

"*Ah! ces beaux jours! ce bon Louis Philippe, ce cher petit Joinville*," sighed the Vicomte.

"But at that day you compared *le bon* Louis Philippe to Robert Macaire. You described all his sons, including, no doubt, *ce cher petit Joinville*, in terms of resentful contempt, as so many plausible *gamins* whom Robert Macaire was

training to cheat the public in the interest of the family firm. I remember my father saying to you in answer, 'No royal house in Europe has more sought to develop the literature of an epoch, and to signalise its representatives by social respect and official honours, than that of the Orleans dynasty; you, M. de Brézé, do but imitate your elders in seeking to destroy the dynasty under which you flourish; should you succeed, you *hommes de plume* will be the first sufferers and the loudest complainers.'"

"*Cher Monsieur Vane*," said the Vicomte, smiling complacently, "your father did me great honour in classing me with Victor Hugo, Alexandre Dumas, Emile de Girardin, and the other stars of the Orleanist galaxy, including our friend here, M. Savarin. A very superior man was your father."

"And," said Savarin, who, being an Orleanist, had listened to Graham's speech with an approving smile—"and if I remember right, my dear De Brézé, no one was more brilliantly severe than yourself on poor De Lamartine and the Republic that succeeded Louis Philippe; no one more emphatically expressed the yearning desire for another Napoleon to restore order at home and renown abroad. Now you have got another Napoleon."

"And I want change for my Napoleon," said De Brézé, laughing.

"My dear Vicomte," said Graham, "one thing we may all grant, that in culture and intellect you are far superior to the mass of your fellow-Parisians; that you are therefore a favourable type of their political character."

"*Ah, mon cher, vous êtes trop aimable.*"

"And therefore I venture to say this, if the archangel Gabriel were permitted to descend to Paris and form the best government for France that the wisdom of seraph could devise, it would not be two years—I doubt if it would be six months—before out of this Paris, which you call the *Foyer des Idées*, would emerge a powerful party, adorned by yourself and other *hommes de plume*, in favour of a revolution for the benefit of *ce bon* Satan and *ce cher petit* Beelzebub."

"What a pretty vein of satire you have, *mon cher!*" said the Vicomte, good-humouredly; "there is a sting of truth in your witticism. Indeed, I must send you some

articles of mine in which I have said much the same thing —*les beaux esprits se rencontrent.* The fault of us French is impatience—desire of change; but then it is that desire which keeps the world going and retains our place at the head of it. However, at this time we are all living too fast for our money to keep up with it, and too slow for our intellect not to flag. We vie with each other on the road to ruin, for in literature all the old paths to fame are shut up."

Here a tall gentleman, with whom the Vicomte had been conversing before he accosted Vane, and who had remained beside De Brézé listening in silent attention to this colloquy, interposed, speaking in the slow voice of one accustomed to measure his words, and with a slight but unmistakable German accent—"There is that, M. de Brézé, which makes one think gravely of what you say so lightly. Viewing things with the unprejudiced eyes of a foreigner, I recognise much for which France should be grateful to the Emperor. Under his sway her material resources have been marvellously augmented; her commerce has been placed by the treaty with England on sounder foundations, and is daily exhibiting richer life; her agriculture has made a prodigious advance wherever it has allowed room for capitalists, and escaped from the curse of petty allotments and peasant-proprietors—a curse which would have ruined any country less blessed by Nature; turbulent factions have been quelled; internal order maintained; the external prestige of France, up at least to the date of the Mexican war, increased to an extent that might satisfy even a Frenchman's *amour propre;* and her advance in civilisation has been manifested by the rapid creation of a naval power which should put England on her mettle. But, on the other hand——"

"Ay, on the other hand," said the Vicomte.

"On the other hand there are in the imperial system two causes of decay and of rot silently at work. They may not be the faults of the Emperor, but they are such misfortunes as may cause the fall of the Empire. The first is an absolute divorce between the political system and the intellectual culture of the nation. The throne and the system rest on universal suffrage—on a suffrage which gives to classes the most ignorant a power that prepon-

derates over all the healthful elements of knowledge. It is the tendency of all ignorant multitudes to personify themselves, as it were, in one individual. They cannot comprehend you when you argue for a principle; they do comprehend you when you talk of a name. The Emperor Napoleon is to them a name, and the prefects and officials who influence their votes are paid for incorporating all principles in the shibboleth of that single name. You have thus sought the well-spring of a political system in the deepest stratum of popular ignorance. To rid popular ignorance of its normal revolutionary bias, the rural peasants are indoctrinated with the conservatism that comes from the fear which appertains to property. They have their roods of land or their shares in a national loan. Thus you estrange the crassitude of an ignorant democracy still more from the intelligence of the educated classes by combining it with the most selfish and abject of all the apprehensions that are ascribed to aristocracy and wealth. What is thus embedded in the depths of your society makes itself shown on the surface. Napoleon III. has been compared to Augustus; and there are many startling similitudes between them in character and in fate. Each succeeds to the heritage of a great name that had contrived to unite autocracy with the popular cause. Each subdued all rival competitors, and inaugurated despotic rule in the name of freedom. Each mingled enough of sternness with ambitious will to stain with bloodshed the commencement of his power; but it would be an absurd injustice to fix the same degree of condemnation on the *coup d'état* as humanity fixes on the earlier cruelties of Augustus. Each, once firm in his seat, became mild and clement: Augustus perhaps from policy, Napoleon III. from a native kindliness of disposition which no fair critic of character can fail to acknowledge. Enough of similitudes; now for one salient difference. Observe how earnestly Augustus strove, and how completely he succeeded in the task, to rally round him all the leading intellects in every grade and of every party—the followers of Antony, the friends of Brutus—every great captain, every great statesman, every great writer, every man who could lend a ray of mind to his own Julian constellation, and make the age of Augustus an era in the annals of human intellect and genius. But this has not been the

good fortune of your Emperor. The result of his system has been the suppression of intellect in every department. He has rallied round him not one great statesman; his praises are hymned by not one great poet. The *célébrités* of a former day stand aloof; or, preferring exile to constrained allegiance, assail him with unremitting missiles from their asylum in foreign shores. His reign is sterile of new *célébrités*. The few that arise enlist themselves against him. Whenever he shall venture to give full freedom to the press and to the legislature, the intellect thus suppressed or thus hostile will burst forth in collected volume. His partisans have not been trained and disciplined to meet such assailants. They will be as weak as no doubt they will be violent. And the worst is, that the intellect thus rising in mass against him will be warped and distorted, like captives who, being kept in chains, exercise their limbs, on escaping, in vehement jumps without definite object. The directors of emancipated opinion may thus be terrible enemies to the Imperial Government, but they will be very unsafe councillors to France. Concurrently with this divorce between the Imperial system and the national intellect — a divorce so complete that even your *salons* have lost their wit, and even your caricatures their point—a corruption of manners which the Empire, I own, did not originate, but inherit, has become so common that every one owns and nobody blames it. The gorgeous ostentation of the Court has perverted the habits of the people. The intelligence obstructed from other vents betakes itself to speculating for a fortune; and the greed of gain and the passion for show are sapping the noblest elements of the old French manhood. Public opinion stamps with no opprobrium a minister or favourite who profits by a job; and I fear that you will find that jobbing pervades all your administrative departments."

"All very true," said De Brézé, with a shrug of the shoulders and in a tone of levity that seemed to ridicule the assertion he volunteered; "Virtue and Honour banished from courts and *salons* and the cabinets of authors, ascend to fairer heights in the attics of *ouvriers*."

"The *ouvriers, ouvriers* of Paris!" cried this terrible German.

"Ay, Monsieur le Comte, what can you say against our

ouvriers? A German count cannot condescend to learn anything about *ces petites gens.*"

"Monsieur," replied the German, "in the eyes of a statesman there are no *petites gens*, and in those of a philosopher no *petites choses*. We in Germany have too many difficult problems affecting our working classes to solve, not to have induced me to glean all the information I can as to the *ouvriers* of Paris. They have among them men of aspirations as noble as can animate the souls of philosophers and poets, perhaps not the less noble because common-sense and experience cannot follow their flight. But, as a body, the *ouvriers* of Paris have not been elevated in political morality by the benevolent aim of the Emperor to find them ample work and good wages independent of the natural laws that regulate the markets of labour. Accustomed thus to consider the State bound to maintain them, the moment the State fails in that impossible task, they will accommodate their honesty to a rush upon property under the name of social reform. Have you not noticed how largely increased within the last few years is the number of those who cry out, '*La Propriété, c'est le vol*'? Have you considered the rapid growth of the International Association? I do not say that for all these evils the Empire is exclusively responsible. To a certain degree they are found in all rich communities, especially where democracy is more or less in the ascendant. To a certain extent they exist in the large towns of Germany; they are conspicuously increasing in England; they are acknowledged to be dangerous in the United States of America; they are, I am told on good authority, making themselves visible with the spread of civilisation in Russia. But under the French Empire they have become glaringly rampant, and I venture to predict that the day is not far off when the rot at work throughout all layers and strata of French society will insure a fall of the fabric at the sound of which the world will ring.

"There is many a fair and stately tree which continues to throw out its leaves and rear its crest till suddenly the wind smites it, and then, and not till then, the trunk which seems so solid is found to be but the rind to a mass of crumbled powder."

"Monsieur le Comte," said the Vicomte, "you are a

severe critic and a lugubrious prophet. But a German is so safe from revolution that he takes alarm at the stir of movement which is the normal state of the French *esprit*."

"French *esprit* may soon evaporate into Parisian *bêtise*. As to Germany being safe from revolution, allow me to repeat a saying of Goethe's—but has M. le Vicomte ever heard of Goethe?"

"Goethe, of course—*très joli écrivain*."

"Goethe said to some one who was making much the same remark as yourself, 'We Germans are in a state of revolution now, but we do things so slowly that it will be a hundred years before we Germans shall find it out. But when completed, it will be the greatest revolution society has yet seen, and will last like the other revolutions that, beginning, scarce noticed, in Germany, have transformed the world.'"

"*Diable*, M. le Comte!" Germans transformed the world! What revolutions do you speak of?"

"The invention of gunpowder, the invention of printing, and the expansion of a monk's quarrel with his Pope into the Lutheran revolution."

Here the German paused, and asked the Vicomte to introduce him to Vane, which De Brézé did by the title of Count von Rudesheim. On hearing Vane's name, the Count inquired if he were related to the orator and statesman, George Graham Vane, whose opinions, uttered in Parliament, were still authoritative among German thinkers. This compliment to his deceased father immensely gratified, but at the same time considerably surprised, the Englishman. His father, no doubt, had been a man of much influence in the British House of Commons—a very weighty speaker, and, while in office, a first-rate administrator; but Englishmen know what a House of Commons reputation is—how fugitive, how little cosmopolitan; and that a German count should ever have heard of his father, delighted, but amazed him. In stating himself to be the son of George Graham Vane, he intimated not only the delight, but the amaze, with the frank *savoir vivre* which was one of his salient characteristics.

"Sir," replied the German, speaking in very correct English, but still with his national accent, "every German reared to political service studies England as the school

for practical thought distinct from impracticable theories. Long may you allow us to do so; only excuse me one remark; never let the selfish element of the practical supersede the generous element. Your father never did so in his speeches, and therefore we admired him. At the present day we don't so much care to study English speeches. They may be insular,—they are not European. I honour England; Heaven grant that you may not be making sad mistakes in the belief that you can long remain England if you cease to be European." Herewith the German bowed, not uncivilly—on the contrary, somewhat ceremoniously—and disappeared with a Prussian Secretary of Embassy, whose arm he linked in his own, into a room less frequented.

"Vicomtè, who and what is your German count?" asked Vane.

"A solemn pedant," answered the lively Vicomte—"a German count, *que voulez-vous de plus?*"

CHAPTER VII.

A LITTLE later Graham found himself alone amongst the crowd. Attracted by the sound of music, he had strayed into one of the rooms whence it came, and in which, though his range of acquaintance at Paris was, for an Englishman, large and somewhat miscellaneous, he recognised no familiar countenance. A lady was playing the pianoforte—playing remarkably well—with accurate science, with that equal lightness and strength of finger which produces brilliancy of execution. But to appreciate her music one should be musical one's self. It wanted the charm that fascinates the uninitiated. The guests in the room were musical connoisseurs—a class with whom Graham Vane had nothing in common. Even if he had been more capable of enjoying the excellence of the player's performance, the glance he directed towards her would have sufficed to chill him into indifference. She was not young, and with prominent features and puckered skin, was twisting her face into strange sentimental grimaces, as if terribly overcome by the beauty and pathos of her own melodies. To add to Vane's displeasure, she was dressed in a costume wholly antagonistic to his views of the becoming—in a Greek jacket of gold and scarlet, contrasted by a Turkish turban.

Muttering "What she-mountebank have we here?" he sank into a chair behind the door, and fell into an absorbed reverie. From this he was aroused by the cessation of the music, and the hum of subdued approbation by which it was followed. Above the hum swelled the imposing voice of M. Louvier, as he rose from a seat on the other side of the piano, by which his bulky form had been partially concealed.

"Bravo! perfectly played—excellent! Can we not persuade your charming young countrywoman to gratify us even by a single song?" Then turning aside and ad-

dessing some one else invisible to Graham, he said, "Does that tyrannical doctor still compel you to silence, Mademoiselle?"

A voice so sweetly modulated, that if there were any sarcasm in the words it was lost in the softness of pathos, answered, "Nay, M. Louvier, he rather overtasks the words at my command in thankfulness to those who, like yourself, so kindly regard me as something else than a singer."

It was not the she-mountebank who thus spoke. Graham rose and looked round with instinctive curiosity. He met the face that he said had haunted him. She too had risen, standing near the piano, with one hand tenderly resting on the she-mountebank's scarlet and gilded shoulder:—the face that haunted him, and yet with a difference. There was a faint blush on the clear pale cheek, a soft yet playful light in the grave dark-blue eyes, which had not been visible in the countenance of the young lady in the pearl-coloured robe. Graham did not hear Louvier's reply, though no doubt it was loud enough for him to hear. He sank again into reverie. Other guests now came into the room, among them Frank Morley, styled Colonel—(eminent military titles in the United States do not always denote eminent military services)—a wealthy American, and his sprightly and beautiful wife. The Colonel was a clever man, rather stiff in his deportment, and grave in speech, but by no means without a vein of dry humour. By the French he was esteemed a high-bred specimen of the kind of *grand seigneur* which democratic republics engender. He spoke French like a Parisian, had an imposing presence, and spent a great deal of money with the elegance of a man of taste and the generosity of a man of heart. His high breeding was not quite so well understood by the English, because the English are apt to judge breeding by little conventional rules not observed by the American Colonel. He had a slight nasal twang, and introduced "sir" with redundant ceremony in addressing Englishmen, however intimate he might be with them, and had the habit (perhaps with a sly intention to startle or puzzle them) of adorning his style of conversation with quaint Americanisms.

Nevertheless, the genial amiability and the inherent

dignity of his character made him acknowledged as a thorough gentleman by every Englishman, however conventional in tastes, who became admitted into his intimate acquaintance.

Mrs. Morley, ten or twelve years younger than her husband, had no nasal twang, and employed no Americanisms in her talk, which was frank, lively, and at times eloquent. She had a great ambition to be esteemed of a masculine understanding: Nature unkindly frustrated that ambition in rendering her a model of feminine grace. Graham was intimately acquainted with Colonel Morley; and with Mrs. Morley had contracted one of those cordial friendships, which, perfectly free alike from polite flirtation and Platonic attachment, do sometimes spring up between persons of opposite sexes without the slightest danger of changing their honest character into morbid sentimentality or unlawful passion. The Morleys stopped to accost Graham, but the lady had scarcely said three words to him, before, catching sight of the haunting face, she darted towards it. Her husband, less emotional, bowed at the distance, and said, "To my taste, sir, the Signorina Cicogna is the loveliest girl in the present *bee*,* and full of mind, sir."

"Singing mind," said Graham, sarcastically, and in the ill-natured impulse of a man striving to check his inclination to admire.

"I have not heard her sing," replied the American, drily; "and the words 'singing mind' are doubtless accurately English, since you employ them; but at Boston the collocation would be deemed barbarous. You fly off the handle. The epithet, sir, is not in concord with the substantive."

"Boston would be in the right, my dear Colonel. I stand rebuked; mind has little to do with singing."

"I take leave to deny that, sir. You fire into the wrong flock, and would not hazard the remark if you had conversed as I have with Signorina Cicogna."

Before Graham could answer, Signorina Cicogna stood before him leaning lightly on Mrs. Morley's arm.

"Frank, you must take us into the refreshment-room,"

* *Bee*, a common expression in "the West" for a meeting or gathering of people.

said Mrs. Morley to her husband; and then, turning to Graham, added, "Will you help to make way for us?"

Graham bowed, and offered his arm to the fair speaker.

"No," said she, taking her husband's. "Of course you know the Signorina, or, as we usually call her, Mademoiselle Cicogna. No? Allow me to present you—Mr. Graham Vane—Mademoiselle Cicogna. Mademoiselle speaks English like a native."

And thus abruptly Graham was introduced to the owner of the haunting face. He had lived too much in the great world all his life to retain the innate shyness of an Englishman, but he certainly was confused and embarrassed when his eyes met Isaura's, and he felt her hand on his arm. Before quitting the room she paused and looked back—Graham's look followed her own, and saw behind them the lady with the scarlet jacket escorted by some portly and decorated connoisseur. Isaura's face brightened to another kind of brightness—a pleased and tender light.

"Poor dear *Madre*," she murmured to herself in Italian.

"*Madre*," echoed Graham, also in Italian. "I have been misinformed, then: that lady is your mother."

Isaura laughed a pretty low silvery laugh, and replied in English, "She is not my mother, but I call her *Madre*, for I know no name more loving."

Graham was touched, and said gently, "Your own mother was evidently very dear to you."

Isaura's lip quivered, and she made a slight movement as if she would have withdrawn her hand from his arm. He saw that he had offended or wounded her, and with the straightforward frankness natural to him, resumed quickly—

"My remark was impertinent in a stranger; forgive it."

"There is nothing to forgive, Monsieur."

The two now threaded their way through the crowd, both silent. At last Isaura, thinking she ought to speak first in order to show that Graham had not offended her, said—

"How lovely Mrs. Morley is!"

"Yes, and I like the spirit and ease of her American manner: have you known her long, Mademoiselle?"

"No; we met her for the first time some weeks ago at M. Savarin's."

"Was she very eloquent on the rights of women?"

"What! you have heard her on that subject?"

"I have rarely heard her on any other, though she is the best and perhaps the cleverest friend I have at Paris; but that may be my fault, for I like to start it. It is a relief to the languid small-talk of society to listen to any one thoroughly in earnest upon turning the world topsy-turvy."

"Do you suppose poor Mrs. Morley would seek to do that if she had her rights?" asked Isaura, with her musical laugh.

"Not a doubt of it; but perhaps you share her opinions."

"I scarcely know what her opinions are, but——"

"Yes—but?——"

"There is a—what shall I call it?—a persuasion—a sentiment—out of which the opinions probably spring that I do share."

"Indeed? a persuasion, a sentiment, for instance, that a woman should have votes in the choice of legislators, and, I presume, in the task of legislation?"

"No, that is not what I mean. Still, that is an opinion, right or wrong, which grows out of the sentiment I speak of."

"Pray explain the sentiment."

"It is always so difficult to define a sentiment, but does it not strike you that in proportion as the tendency of modern civilisation has been to raise women more and more to an intellectual equality with men—in proportion as they read and study and think—an uneasy sentiment, perhaps querulous, perhaps unreasonable, grows up within their minds that the conventions of the world are against the complete development of the faculties thus aroused and the ambition thus animated;—that they cannot but rebel, though it may be silently, against the notions of the former age, when women were not thus educated; notions that the aim of the sex should be to steal through life unremarked; that it is a reproach to be talked of; that women are plants to be kept in a hothouse and forbidden the frank liberty of growth in the natural air and sunshine of heaven. This, at least, is a sentiment which has sprung up within myself, and I imagine that it is the sentiment which has given birth to many of the opinions or doctrines that seem absurd, and

very likely are so, to the general public. I don't pretend even to have considered those doctrines. I don't pretend to say what may be the remedies for the restlessness and uneasiness I feel. I doubt if on this earth there be any remedies; all I know is, that I feel restless and uneasy."

Graham gazed on her countenance as she spoke, with an astonishment not unmingled with tenderness and compassion—astonishment at the contrast between a vein of reflection so hardy, expressed in a style of language that seemed to him so masculine, and the soft velvet dreamy eyes, the gentle tones, and delicate purity of hues rendered younger still by the blush that deepened their bloom.

At this moment they had entered the refreshment-room; but a dense group being round the table, and both perhaps forgetting the object for which Mrs. Morley had introduced them to each other, they had mechanically seated themselves on an ottoman in a recess while Isaura was yet speaking. It must seem as strange to the reader as it did to Graham that such a speech should have been spoken by so young a girl to an acquaintance so new. But in truth Isaura was very little conscious of Graham's presence. She had got on a subject that perplexed and tormented her solitary thoughts—she was but thinking aloud.

"I believe," said Graham, after a pause, "that I comprehend your sentiment much better than I do Mrs. Morley's opinions; but permit me one observation. You say, truly, that the course of modern civilisation has more or less affected the relative position of woman cultivated beyond that level on which she was formerly contented to stand—the nearer perhaps to the heart of man because not lifting her head to his height;—and hence a sense of restlessness, uneasiness. But do you suppose that, in this whirl and dance of the atoms which compose the rolling ball of the civilised world, it is only women that are made restless and uneasy? Do you not see amid the masses congregated in the wealthiest cities of the world, writhings and struggles against the received order of things? In this sentiment of discontent there is a certain truthfulness, because it is an element of human nature; and how best to deal with it is a problem yet unsolved. But in the opinions and doctrines to which, among the masses, the sentiment gives birth, the

wisdom of the wisest detects only the certainty of a common ruin, offering for reconstruction the same building materials as the former edifice—materials not likely to be improved because they may be defaced. Ascend from the working classes to all others in which civilised culture prevails, and you will find that same restless feeling—the fluttering of untried wings against the bars between wider space and their longings. Could you poll all the educated ambitious young men in England—perhaps in Europe—at least half of them, divided between a reverence for the past and a curiosity as to the future, would sigh, 'I am born a century too late or a century too soon!'"

Isaura listened to this answer with a profound and absorbing interest. It was the first time that a clever young man talked thus sympathetically to her, a clever young girl.

Then rising, he said, "I see your *Madre* and our American friends are darting angry looks at me. They have made room for us at the table, and are wondering why I should keep you thus from the good things of this little life. One word more ere we join them—Consult your own mind, and consider whether your uneasiness and unrest are caused solely by conventional shackles on your sex. Are they not equally common to the youth of ours?—common to all who seek in art, in letters, nay, in the stormier field of active life, to clasp as a reality some image yet seen but as a dream?"

CHAPTER VIII.

No further conversation in the way of sustained dialogue took place that evening between Graham and Isaura.

The Americans and the Savarins clustered round Isaura when they quitted the refreshment-room. The party was breaking up. Vane would have offered his arm again to Isaura, but M. Savarin had forestalled him. The American was despatched by his wife to see for the carriage; and Mrs. Morley said, with her wonted sprightly tone of command—

"Now, Mr. Vane, you have no option but to take care of me to the shawl-room."

Madame Savarin and Signora Venosta had each found their cavaliers, the Italian still retaining hold of the portly connoisseur, and the Frenchwoman accepting the safeguard of the Vicomte de Brézé. As they descended the stairs, Mrs. Morley asked Graham what he thought of the young lady to whom she had presented him.

"I think she is charming," answered Graham.

"Of course; that is the stereotyped answer to all such questions, especially by you Englishmen. In public or in private, England is the mouthpiece of platitudes."

"It is natural for an American to think so. Every child that has just learned to speak uses bolder expressions than its grandmamma; but I am rather at a loss to know by what novelty of phrase an American would have answered your question."

"An American would have discovered that Isaura Cicogna had a soul, and his answer would have confessed it."

"It strikes me that he would then have uttered a platitude more stolid than mine. Every Christian knows that the dullest human being has a soul. But, to speak frankly, I grant that my answer did not do justice to the Signorina, nor to the impression she makes on me; and putting aside

the charm of the face, there is a charm in a mind that seems to have gathered stores of reflection which I should scarcely have expected to find in a young lady brought up to be a professional singer."

"You add prejudice to platitude, and are horribly prosaic to-night; but here we are in the shawl-room. I must take another opportunity of attacking you. Pray dine with us to-morrow; you will meet our Minister and a few other pleasant friends."

"I suppose I must not say, 'I shall be charmed,'" answered Vane; "but I shall be."

"*Bon Dieu!* that horrid fat man has deserted Signora Venosta—looking for his own cloak, I dare-say. Selfish monster!—go and hand her to her carriage—quick, it is announced!"

Graham, thus ordered, hastened to offer his arm to the she-mountebank. Somehow she had acquired dignity in his eyes, and he did not feel the least ashamed of being in contact with the scarlet jacket.

The Signora grappled to him with a confiding familiarity.

"I am afraid," she said in Italian, as they passed along the spacious hall to the *porte cochère*—"I am afraid that I did not make a good effect to-night—I was nervous; did not you perceive it?"

"No, indeed; you enchanted us all," replied the dissimulator.

"How amiable you are to say so!—you must think that I sought for a compliment. So I did—you gave me more than I deserved. Wine is the milk of old men, and praise of old women. But an old man may be killed by too much wine, and an old woman lives all the longer for too much praise—*buona notte.*"

Here she sprang, lithesomely enough, into the carriage, and Isaura followed, escorted by M. Savarin. As the two men returned towards the shawl-room, the Frenchman said, "Madame Savarin and I complain that you have not let us see so much of you as we ought. No doubt you are greatly sought after; but are you free to take your soup with us the day after to-morrow? You will meet the Count von Rudesheim and a few others more lively if less wise."

"The day after to-morrow I will mark with a white stone. To dine with M. Savarin is an event to a man who covets distinction."

"Such compliments reconcile an author to his trade. You deserve the best return I can make you. You will meet *la belle Isaure*. I have just engaged her and her *chaperon*. She is a girl of true genius, and genius is like those objects of virtu which belong to a former age, and become every day more scarce and more precious."

Here they encountered Colonel Morley and his wife hurrying to their carriage. The American stopped Vane, and whispered, "I am glad, sir, to hear from my wife that you dine with us to-morrow. Sir, you will meet Mademoiselle Cicogna, and I am not without a kinkle * that you will be enthused."

"This seems like a fatality," soliloquised Vane as he walked through the deserted streets towards his lodging. "I strove to banish that haunting face from my mind. I had half forgotten it, and now——" Here his murmur sank into silence. He was deliberating in very conflicted thought whether or not he should write to refuse the two invitations he had accepted.

"Pooh!" he said at last, as he reached the door of his lodging, "is my reason so weak that it should be influenced by a mere superstition? Surely I know myself too well, and have tried myself too long, to fear that I should be untrue to the duty and ends of my life, even if I found my heart in danger of suffering."

Certainly the Fates do seem to mock our resolves to keep our feet from their ambush, and our hearts from their snare.

How our lives may be coloured by that which seems to us the most trivial accident, the merest chance! Suppose that Alain de Rochebriant had been invited to that *réunion* at M. Louvier's, and Graham Vane had accepted some other invitation and passed his evening elsewhere, Alain would probably have been presented to Isaura—what then might have happened? The impression Isaura had already made upon the young Frenchman was not so deep as that made upon Graham; but then, Alain's resolution to efface

* A notion.

it was but commenced that day, and by no means yet confirmed. And if *he* had been the first clever young man to talk earnestly to that clever young girl, who can guess what impression he might have made upon her? His conversation might have had less philosophy and strong sense than Graham's, but more of poetic sentiment and fascinating romance.

However, the history of events that do not come to pass is not in the chronicle of the Fates.

BOOK III

BOOK III.

CHAPTER I.

THE next day the guests at the Morleys' had assembled when Vane entered. His apology for unpunctuality was cut short by the lively hostess: "Your pardon is granted without the humiliation of asking for it; we know that the characteristic of the English is always to be a little behindhand."

She then proceeded to introduce him to the American Minister, to a distinguished American poet, with a countenance striking for mingled sweetness and power, and one or two other of her countrymen sojourning at Paris; and this ceremony over, dinner was announced, and she bade Graham offer his arm to Mademoiselle Cicogna.

"Have you ever visited the United States, Mademoiselle?" asked Vane, as they seated themselves at the table.

"No."

"It is a voyage you are sure to make soon."

"Why so?"

"Because report says you will create a great sensation at the very commencement of your career; and the New World is ever eager to welcome each celebrity that is achieved in the Old; more especially that which belongs to your enchanting art."

"True, sir," said an American senator, solemnly striking into the conversation; "we are an appreciative people; and if that lady be as fine a singer as I am told, she might command any amount of dollars."

Isaura coloured, and turning to Graham, asked him in a low voice if he were fond of music.

"I ought of course to say 'yes,'" answered Graham, in

the same tone; "but I doubt if that 'yes' would be an honest one. In some moods, music—if a kind of music I like—affects me very deeply; in other moods, not at all. And I cannot bear much at a time. A concert wearies me shamefully; even an opera always seems to me a great deal too long. But I ought to add that I am no judge of music; that music was never admitted into my education; and, between ourselves, I doubt if there be one Englishman in five hundred who would care for opera or concert if it were not the fashion to say he did. Does my frankness revolt you?"

"On the contrary—I sometimes doubt, especially of late, if I am fond of music myself."

"Signorina—pardon me—it is impossible that you should not be. Genius can never be untrue to itself, and must love that in which it excels—that by which it communicates joy, and," he added, with a half-suppressed sigh, "attains to glory."

"Genius is a divine word, and not to be applied to a singer," said Isaura, with a humility in which there was an earnest sadness.

Graham was touched and startled; but before he could answer, the American Minister appealed to him across the table, asking if he had quoted accurately a passage in a speech by Graham's distinguished father, in regard to the share which England ought to take in the political affairs of Europe.

The conversation now became general; very political and very serious. Graham was drawn into it, and grew animated and eloquent.

Isaura listened to him with admiration. She was struck by what seemed to her a nobleness of sentiment which elevated his theme above the level of commonplace polemics. She was pleased to notice, in the attentive silence of his intelligent listeners, that they shared the effect produced on herself. In fact, Graham Vane was a born orator, and his studies had been those of a political thinker. In common talk he was but the accomplished man of the world, easy and frank and genial, with a touch of good-natured sarcasm. But when the subject started drew him upward to those heights in which politics become the science of humanity, he seemed a changed being. His

cheek glowed, his eye brightened, his voice mellowed into richer tones, his language became unconsciously adorned. In such moments there might scarcely be an audience, even differing from him in opinion, which would not have acknowledged his spell.

When the party adjourned to the *salon*, Isaura said softly to Graham, "I understand why you did not cultivate music; and I think, too, that I can now understand what effects the human voice can produce on human minds, without recurring to the art of song."

"Ah," said Graham, with a pleased smile, "do not make me ashamed of my former rudeness by the revenge of compliment, and, above all, do not disparage your own art by supposing that any prose effect of voice in its utterance of mind can interpret that which music alone can express, even to listeners so uncultured as myself. Am I not told truly by musical composers, when I ask them to explain in words what they say in their music, that such explanation is impossible, that music has a language of its own untranslatable by words?"

"Yes," said Isaura, with thoughtful brow but brightening eyes, "you are told truly. It was only the other day that I was pondering over that truth."

"But what recesses of mind, of heart, of soul, this untranslatable language penetrates and brightens up! How incomplete the grand nature of man—though man the grandest—would be, if you struck out of his reason the comprehension of poetry, music, and religion! In each are reached and are sounded deeps in his reason otherwise concealed from himself. History, knowledge, science, stop at the point in which mystery begins. There they meet with the world of shadow. Not an inch of that world can they penetrate without the aid of poetry and religion, two necessities of intellectual man much more nearly allied than the votaries of the practical and the positive suppose. To the aid and elevation of both those necessities comes in music, and there has never existed a religion in the world which has not demanded music as its ally. If, as I said frankly, it is only in certain moods of my mind that I enjoy music, it is only because in certain moods of my mind I am capable of quitting the guidance of prosaic reason for the world of shadow; that I am so susceptible

as at every hour, were my nature perfect, I should be to the mysterious influences of poetry and religion. Do you understand what I wish to express?"

"Yes, I do, and clearly."

"Then, Signorina, you are forbidden to undervalue the gift of song. You must feel its power over the heart, when you enter the opera-house; over the soul, when you kneel in a cathedral."

"Oh," cried Isaura, with enthusiasm, a rich glow mantling over her lovely face, "how I thank you! Is it you who say you do not love music? How much better you understand it than I did till this moment!"

Here Mrs. Morley, joined by the American poet, came to the corner in which the Englishman and the singer had niched themselves. The poet began to talk, the other guests gathered round, and every one listened reverentially till the party broke up. Colonel Morley handed Isaura to her carriage—the she-mountebank again fell to the lot of Graham.

"Signor," said she, as he respectfully placed her shawl round her scarlet-and-gilt jacket, "are we so far from Paris that you cannot spare the time to call? My child does not sing in public, but at home you can hear her. It is not every woman's voice that is sweetest at home."

Graham bowed, and said he would call on the morrow.

Isaura mused in silent delight over the words which had so extolled the art of the singer. Alas, poor child! she could not guess that in those words, reconciling her to the profession of the stage, the speaker was pleading against his own heart.

There was in Graham's nature, as I think it commonly is in that of most true orators, a wonderful degree of *intellectual conscience* which impelled him to acknowledge the benignant influences of song, and to set before the young singer the noblest incentives to the profession to which he deemed her assuredly destined. But in so doing he must have felt that he was widening the gulf between her life and his own; perhaps he wished to widen it in proportion as he dreaded to listen to any voice in his heart which asked if the gulf might not be overleapt.

CHAPTER II.

On the morrow Graham called at the villa at A * * *. The two ladies received him in Isaura's chosen sitting-room.

Somehow or other, conversation at first languished. Graham was reserved and distant, Isaura shy and embarrassed.

The Venosta had the *frais* of making talk to herself. Probably at another time Graham would have been amused and interested in the observation of a character new to him, and thoroughly southern—lovable, not more from its *naïve* simplicity of kindliness than from various little foibles and vanities, all of which were harmless, and some of them endearing as those of a child whom it is easy to make happy, and whom it seems so cruel to pain: and with all the Venosta's deviations from the polished and tranquil good taste of the *beau monde*, she had that indescribable grace which rarely deserts a Florentine, so that you might call her odd but not vulgar; while, though uneducated, except in the way of her old profession, and never having troubled herself to read anything but a *libretto*, and the pious books commended to her by her confessor, the artless babble of her talk every now and then flashed out with a quaint humour, lighting up terse fragments of the old Italian wisdom which had mysteriously embedded themselves in the groundwork of her mind.

But Graham was not at this time disposed to judge the poor Venosta kindly or fairly. Isaura had taken high rank in his thoughts. He felt an impatient resentment mingled with anxiety and compassionate tenderness at a companionship which seemed to him derogatory to the position he would have assigned to a creature so gifted, and unsafe as a guide amidst the perils and trials to which the youth, the beauty, and the destined profession of Isaura were exposed. Like most Englishmen—especially English-

men wise in the knowledge of life—he held in fastidious regard the proprieties and conventions by which the dignity of woman is fenced round; and of those proprieties and conventions the Venosta naturally appeared to him a very unsatisfactory guardian and representative.

Happily unconscious of these hostile prepossessions, the elder Signora chatted on very gaily to the visitor. She was in excellent spirits; people had been very civil to her both at Colonel Morley's and M. Louvier's. The American Minister had praised the scarlet jacket. She was convinced she had made a sensation two nights running. When the *amour propre* is pleased, the tongue is freed.

The Venosta ran on in praise of Paris and the Parisians, of Louvier and his *soirée* and the pistachio ice; of the Americans and a certain *crême de maraschino* which she hoped the Signor Inglese had not failed to taste—the *crême de maraschino* led her thoughts back to Italy. Then she grew mournful—how she missed the native *beau ciel!* Paris was pleasant, but how absurd to call it "*le Paradis des Femmes*"—as if *les Femmes* could find Paradise in a *brouillard!*

"But," she exclaimed, with vivacity of voice and gesticulation, "the Signor does not come to hear the parrot talk. He is engaged to come that he may hear the nightingale sing. A drop of honey attracts the fly more than a bottle of vinegar."

Graham could not help smiling at this adage. "I submit," said he, "to your comparison as regards myself; but certainly anything less like a bottle of vinegar than your amiable conversation I cannot well conceive. However, the metaphor apart, I scarcely know how I dare ask Mademoiselle to sing after the confession I made to her last night."

"What confession?" asked the Venosta.

"That I know nothing of music, and doubt if I can honestly say that I am fond of it."

"Not fond of music! Impossible! You slander yourself. He who loves not music would have a dull time of it in heaven. But you are English, and perhaps have only heard the music of your own country. Bad, very bad—a heretic's music! Now listen."

Seating herself at the piano, she began an air from the

"*Lucia*," crying out to Isaura to come and sing to her accompaniment.

"Do you really wish it?" asked Isaura of Graham, fixing on him questioning timid eyes.

"I cannot say how much I wish to hear you."

Isaura moved to the instrument, and Graham stood behind her. Perhaps he felt that he should judge more impartially of her voice if not subjected to the charm of her face.

But the first note of the voice held him spell-bound: in itself, the organ was of the rarest order, mellow and rich, but so soft that its power was lost in its sweetness, and so exquisitely fresh in every note.

But the singer's charm was less in voice than in feeling —she conveyed to the listener so much more than was said by the words, or even implied by the music. Her song in this caught the art of the painter who impresses the mind with the consciousness of a something which the eye cannot detect on the canvas.

She seemed to breathe out from the depths of her heart the intense pathos of the original romance, so far exceeding that of the opera—the human tenderness, the mystic terror of a tragic love-tale more solemn in its sweetness than that of Verona.

When her voice died away no applause came—not even a murmur. Isaura bashfully turned round to steal a glance at her silent listener, and beheld moistened eyes and quivering lips. At that moment she was reconciled to her art. Graham rose abruptly and walked to the window.

"Do you doubt now if you are fond of music?" cried the Venosta.

"This is more than music," answered Graham, still with averted face. Then, after a short pause, he approached Isaura, and said, with a melancholy half-smile—

"I do not think, Mademoiselle, that I could dare to hear you often; it would take me too far from the hard real world: and he who would not be left behindhand on the road that he must journey cannot indulge frequent excursions into fairy-land."

"Yet," said Isaura, in a tone yet sadder, "I was told in my childhood, by one whose genius gives authority to her words, that beside the real world lies the ideal. The real

world then seemed rough to me. 'Escape,' said my counsellor, 'is granted from that stony thoroughfare into the fields beyond its formal hedgerows. The ideal world has its sorrows, but it never admits despair.' That counsel then, methought, decided my choice of life. I know not now if it has done so."

"Fate," answered Graham, slowly and thoughtfully—"Fate, which is not the ruler but the servant of Providence, decides our choice of life, and rarely from outward circumstances. Usually the motive power is within. We apply the word genius to the minds of the gifted few; but in all of us there is a genius that is inborn, a pervading something which distinguishes our very identity, and dictates to the conscience that which we are best fitted to do and to be. In so dictating it compels our choice of life; or if we resist the dictate, we find at the close that we have gone astray. My choice of life thus compelled is on the stony thoroughfares—yours in the green fields."

As he thus said, his face became clouded and mournful.

The Venosta, quickly tired of a conversation in which she had no part, and having various little household matters to attend to, had during this dialogue slipped unobserved from the room; yet neither Isaura nor Graham felt the sudden consciousness that they were alone which belongs to lovers.

"Why," asked Isaura, with that magic smile reflected in countless dimples which, even when her words were those of a man's reasoning, made them seem gentle with a woman's sentiment—"why must your road through the world be so exclusively the stony one? It is not from necessity—it cannot be from taste. And whatever definition you give to genius, surely it is not your own inborn genius that dictates to you a constant exclusive adherence to the commonplace of life."

"Ah, Mademoiselle! do not misrepresent me. I did not say that I could not sometimes quit the real world for fairy-land—I said that I could not do so often. My vocation is not that of a poet or artist."

"It is that of an orator, I know," said Isaura, kindling; —"so they tell me, and I believe them. But is not the orator somewhat akin to the poet? Is not oratory an art?"

"Let us dismiss the word orator: as applied to English public life, it is a very deceptive expression. The Englishman who wishes to influence his countrymen by force of words spoken must mix with them in their beaten thoroughfares—must make himself master of their practical views and interests—must be conversant with their prosaic occupations and business—must understand how to adjust their loftiest aspirations to their material welfare—must avoid, as the fault most dangerous to himself and to others, that kind of eloquence which is called oratory in France, and which has helped to make the French the worst politicians in Europe. Alas, Mademoiselle! I fear that an English statesman would appear to you a very dull orator."

"I see that I spoke foolishly—yes, you show me that the world of the statesman lies apart from that of the artist. Yet——"

"Yet what?"

"May not the ambition of both be the same?"

"How so?"

"To refine the rude, to exalt the mean—to identify their own fame with some new beauty, some new glory, added to the treasure-house of all."

Graham bowed his head reverently, and then raised it with the flush of enthusiasm on his cheek and brow.

"Oh, Mademoiselle!" he exclaimed, "what a sure guide and what a nobler inspirer to a true Englishman's ambition nature has fitted you to be, were it not——" He paused abruptly.

This outburst took Isaura utterly by surprise. She had been accustomed to the language of compliment till it had begun to pall, but a compliment of this kind was the first that had ever reached her ear. She had no words in answer to it; involuntarily she placed her hand on her heart as if to still its beatings. But the unfinished exclamation, "Were it not," troubled her more than the preceding words had flattered—and mechanically she murmured, "Were it not—what?"

"Oh," answered Graham, affecting a tone of gaiety, "I felt too ashamed of my selfishness as man to finish my sentence."

"Do so, or I shall fancy you refrained lest you might wound me as woman."

"Not so—on the contrary; had I gone on it would have been to say that a woman of your genius, and more especially of such mastery in the most popular and fascinating of all arts, could not be contented if she inspired nobler thoughts in a single breast—she must belong to the public, or rather the public must belong to her: it is but a corner of her heart that an individual can occupy, and even that individual must merge his existence in hers—must be contented to reflect a ray of the light she sheds on admiring thousands. Who could dare to say to you, 'Renounce your career—confine your genius, your art, to the petty circle of home'? To an actress—a singer—with whose fame the world rings, home would be a prison. Pardon me, pardon——"

Isaura had turned away her face to hide tears that would force their way, but she held out her hand to him with a childlike frankness, and said softly, "I am not offended." Graham did not trust himself to continue the same strain of conversation. Breaking into a new subject, he said, after a constrained pause, "Will you think it very impertinent in so new an acquaintance, if I ask how it is that you, an Italian, know our language as a native? and is it by Italian teachers that you have been trained to think and to feel?"

"Mr. Selby, my second father, was an Englishman, and did not speak any other language with comfort to himself. He was very fond of me—and had he been really my father I could not have loved him more: we were constant companions till—till I lost him."

"And no mother left to console you." Isaura shook her head mournfully, and the Venosta here re-entered.

Graham felt conscious that he had already stayed too long, and took leave.

They knew that they were to meet that evening at the Savarins'.

To Graham that thought was not one of unmixed pleasure; the more he knew of Isaura, the more he felt self-reproach that he had allowed himself to know her at all.

But after he had left, Isaura sang low to herself the

song which had so affected her listener; then she fell into abstracted reverie, but she felt a strange and new sort of happiness. In dressing for M. Savarin's dinner, and twining the classic ivy wreath into her dark locks, her Italian servant exclaimed, "How beautiful the Signorina looks to-night?"

CHAPTER III.

M. SAVARIN was one of the most brilliant of that galaxy of literary men which shed lustre on the reign of Louis Philippe.

His was an intellect peculiarly French in its lightness and grace. Neither England nor Germany nor America has produced any resemblance to it. Ireland has, in Thomas Moore; but then in Irish genius there is so much that is French.

M. Savarin was free from the ostentatious extravagance which had come into vogue with the Empire. His house and establishment were modestly maintained within the limit of an income chiefly, perhaps entirely, derived from literary profits.

Though he gave frequent dinners, it was but to few at a time, and without show or pretence. Yet the dinners, though simple, were perfect of their kind; and the host so contrived to infuse his own playful gaiety into the temper of his guests, that the feasts at his house were considered the pleasantest at Paris. On this occasion the party extended to ten, the largest number his table admitted.

All the French guests belonged to the Liberal party, though in changing tints of the tricolor. *Place aux dames*, first to be named were the Countess de Craon and Madame Vertot—both without husbands. The Countess had buried the Count, Madame Vertot had separated from Monsieur. The Countess was very handsome, but she was sixty. Madame Vertot was twenty years younger, but she was very plain. She had quarrelled with the distinguished author for whose sake she had separated from Monsieur, and no man had since presumed to think that he could console a lady so plain for the loss of an author so distinguished.

Both these ladies were very clever. The Countess had written lyrical poems entitled "Cries of Liberty," and a

drama of which Danton was the hero, and the moral too revolutionary for admission to the stage; but at heart the Countess was not at all a revolutionist—the last person in the world to do or desire anything that could bring a washerwoman an inch nearer to a countess. She was one of those persons who play with fire in order to appear enlightened.

Madame Vertot was of severer mould. She had knelt at the feet of M. Thiers, and went into the historico-political line. She had written a remarkable book upon the modern Carthage (meaning England), and more recently a work that had excited much attention upon the Balance of Power, in which she proved it to be the interest of civilisation and the necessity of Europe that Belgium should be added to France, and Prussia circumscribed to the bounds of its original margraviate. She showed how easily these two objects could have been effected by a constitutional monarch instead of an egotistical Emperor. Madame Vertot was a decided Orleanist.

Both these ladies condescended to put aside authorship in general society. Next amongst our guests let me place the Count de Passy and *Madame son épouse*: the Count was seventy-one, and, it is needless to add, a type of Frenchman rapidly vanishing, and not likely to find itself renewed. How shall I describe him so as to make my English reader understand? Let me try by analogy. Suppose a man of great birth and fortune, who in his youth had been an enthusiastic friend of Lord Byron and a jocund companion of George IV.—who had in him an immense degree of lofty romantic sentiment with an equal degree of well-bred worldly cynicism, but who, on account of that admixture, which is rare, kept a high rank in either of the two societies into which, speaking broadly, civilised life divides itself—the romantic and the cynical. The Count de Passy had been the most ardent among the young disciples of Châteaubriand—the most brilliant among the young courtiers of Charles X. Need I add that he had been a terrible lady-killer?

But in spite of his admiration of Châteaubriand and his allegiance to Charles X., the Count had been always true to those caprices of the French *noblesse* from which he descended—caprices which destroyed them in the old Revo-

lution—caprices belonging to the splendid ignorance of their nation in general and their order in particular. Speaking without regard to partial exceptions, the French *gentilhomme* is essentially a Parisian; a Parisian is essentially impressionable to the impulse or fashion of the moment. Is it *à la mode* for the moment to be Liberal or anti-Liberal? Parisians embrace and kiss each other, and swear through life and death to adhere for ever to the *mode* of the moment. The Three Days were the *mode* of the moment—the Count de Passy became an enthusiastic Orleanist. Louis Philippe was very gracious to him. He was decorated—he was named *préfet* of his department—he was created senator—he was about to be sent Minister to a German Court when Louis Philippe fell. The Republic was proclaimed. The Count caught the popular contagion, and after exchanging tears and kisses with patriots whom a week before he had called *canaille*, he swore eternal fidelity to the Republic. The fashion of the moment suddenly became Napoleonic, and with the *coup d'état* the Republic was metamorphosed into an Empire. The Count wept on the bosoms of all the *Vieilles Moustaches* he could find, and rejoiced that the sun of Austerlitz had re-arisen. But after the affair of Mexico the sun of Austerlitz waxed very sickly. Imperialism was fast going out of fashion. The Count transferred his affection to Jules Favre, and joined the ranks of the advanced Liberals. During all these political changes, the Count had remained very much the same man in private life; agreeable, good-natured, witty, and, above all, a devotee of the fair sex. When he had reached the age of sixty-eight he was still *fort bel homme*—unmarried, with a grand presence and charming manner. At that age he said, "*Je me range*," and married a young lady of eighteen. She adored her husband, and was wildly jealous of him; while the Count did not seem at all jealous of her, and submitted to her adoration with a gentle shrug of the shoulders.

The three other guests who, with Graham and the two Italian ladies, made up the complement of ten, were the German Count von Rudesheim, a celebrated French physician named Bacourt, and a young author whom Savarin had admitted into his clique and declared to be of rare promise. This author, whose real name was Gustave

Rameau, but who, to prove, I suppose, the sincerity of that scorn for ancestry which he professed, published his verses under the patrician designation of Alphonse de Valcour, was about twenty-four, and might have passed at the first glance for younger; but, looking at him closely, the signs of old age were already stamped on his visage.

He was undersized, and of a feeble slender frame. In the eyes of women and artists the defects of his frame were redeemed by the extraordinary beauty of the face. His black hair, carefully parted in the centre, and worn long and flowing, contrasted the whiteness of a high though narrow forehead, and the delicate pallor of his cheeks. His features were very regular, his eyes singularly bright; but the expression of the face spoke of fatigue and exhaustion—the silky locks were already thin, and interspersed with threads of silver—the bright eyes shone out from sunken orbits—the lines round the mouth were marked as they are in the middle age of one who has lived too fast.

It was a countenance that might have excited a compassionate and tender interest, but for something arrogant and supercilious in the expression—something that demanded not tender pity but enthusiastic admiration. Yet that expression was displeasing rather to men than to women; and one could well conceive that, among the latter, the enthusiastic admiration it challenged would be largely conceded.

The conversation at dinner was in complete contrast to that at the American's the day before. There the talk, though animated, had been chiefly earnest and serious—here it was all touch and go, sally and repartee. The subjects were the light *on dits* and lively anecdotes of the day, not free from literature and politics, but both treated as matters of *persiflage*, hovered round with a jest and quitted with an epigram. The two French lady authors, the Count de Passy, the physician, and the host, far outshone all the other guests. Now and then, however, the German Count struck in with an ironical remark condensing a great deal of grave wisdom, and the young author with ruder and more biting sarcasm. If the sarcasm told, he showed his triumph by a low-pitched laugh; if it failed, he evinced his displeasure by a contemptuous sneer or a grim scowl.

Isaura and Graham were not seated near each other, and were for the most part contented to be listeners.

On adjourning to the *salon* after dinner, Graham, however, was approaching the chair in which Isaura had placed herself, when the young author, forestalling him, dropped into the seat next to her, and began a conversation in a voice so low that it might have passed for a whisper. The Englishman drew back and observed them. He soon perceived, with a pang of jealousy not unmingled with scorn, that the author's talk appeared to interest Isaura. She listened with evident attention; and when she spoke in return, though Graham did not hear her words, he could observe on her expressive countenance an increased gentleness of aspect.

"I hope," said the physician, joining Graham, as most of the other guests gathered round Savarin, who was in his liveliest vein of anecdote and wit—"I hope that the fair Italian will not allow that ink-bottle imp to persuade her that she has fallen in love with him."

"Do young ladies generally find him so seductive?" asked Graham, with a forced smile.

"Probably enough. He has the reputation of being very clever and very wicked, and that is a sort of character which has the serpent's fascination for the daughters of Eve."

"Is the reputation merited?"

"As to the cleverness, I am not a fair judge. I dislike that sort of writing which is neither manlike nor womanlike, and in which young Rameau excels. He has the knack of finding very exaggerated phrases by which to express commonplace thoughts. He writes verses about love in words so stormy that you might fancy that Jove was descending upon Semele. But when you examine his words, as a sober pathologist like myself is disposed to do, your fear for the peace of households vanishes—they are '*Vox et præterea nihil*'—no man really in love would use them. He writes prose about the wrongs of humanity. You feel for humanity. You say, 'Grant the wrongs, now for the remedy,' and you find nothing but balderdash. Still I am bound to say that both in verse and prose Gustave Rameau is in unison with a corrupt taste of the day, and therefore he is coming into vogue. So much as to his writings; as

to his wickedness, you have only to look at him to feel sure that he is not a hundredth part so wicked as he wishes to seem. In a word, then, Mons. Gustave Rameau is a type of that somewhat numerous class among the youth of Paris, which I call 'the lost Tribe of Absinthe.' There is a set of men who begin to live full gallop while they are still boys. As a general rule, they are originally of the sickly frames which can scarcely even trot, much less gallop, without the spur of stimulants, and no stimulant so fascinates their peculiar nervous system as absinthe. The number of patients in this set who at the age of thirty are more worn out than septuagenarians, increases so rapidly as to make one dread to think what will be the next race of Frenchmen. To the predilection for absinthe young Rameau and the writers of his set add the imitation of Heine, after, indeed, the manner of caricaturists, who effect a likeness striking in proportion as it is ugly. It is not easy to imitate the pathos and the wit of Heine; but it is easy to imitate his defiance of the Deity, his mockery of right and wrong, his relentless war on that heroic standard of thought and action which the writers who exalt their nation intuitively preserve. Rameau cannot be a Heine, but he can be to Heine what a misshapen snarling dwarf is to a mangled blaspheming Titan. Yet he interests the women in general, and he evidently interests the fair Signorina in especial."

Just as Bacourt finished that last sentence, Isaura lifted the head which had hitherto bent in an earnest listening attitude that seemed to justify the Doctor's remarks, and looked round. Her eyes met Graham's with the fearless candour which made half the charm of their bright yet soft intelligence. But she dropped them suddenly with a half-start and a change of colour, for the expression of Graham's face was unlike that which she had hitherto seen on it—it was hard, stern, somewhat disdainful. A minute or so afterwards she rose, and in passing across the room towards the group round the host, paused at a table covered with books and prints near to which Graham was standing—alone. The Doctor had departed in company with the German Count.

Isaura took up one of the prints.

"Ah!" she exclaimed, "Sorrento—my Sorrento. Have you ever visited Sorrento, Mr. Vane?"

Her question and her movement were evidently in conciliation. Was the conciliation prompted by coquetry, or by a sentiment more innocent and artless?

Graham doubted, and replied coldly, as he bent over the print—

"I once stayed there a few days, but my recollection of it is not sufficiently lively to enable me to recognise its features in this design."

"That is the house, at least so they say, of Tasso's father; of course you visited that?"

"Yes, it was a hotel in my time; I lodged there."

"And I too. There I first read 'the Gerusalemme.'" The last words were said in Italian, with a low measured tone, inwardly and dreamily.

A somewhat sharp and incisive voice speaking in French here struck in and prevented Graham's rejoinder: "*Quel joli dessin!* What is it, Mademoiselle?"

Graham recoiled: the speaker was Gustave Rameau, who had, unobserved, first watched Isaura, then rejoined her side.

"A view of Sorrento, Monsieur, but it does not do justice to the place. I was pointing out the house which belonged to Tasso's father."

"Tasso! *Hein!* and which is the fair Eleonora's?"

"Monsieur," answered Isaura, rather startled at that question from a professed *homme de lettres*, "Eleonora did not live at Sorrento."

"*Tant pis pour Sorrente*," said the *homme de lettres*, carelessly. "No one would care for Tasso if it were not for Eleonora."

"I should rather have thought," said Graham, "that no one would have cared for Eleonora if it were not for Tasso."

Rameau glanced at the Englishman superciliously.

"*Pardon*, Monsieur—in every age a love-story keeps its interest; but who cares nowadays for *le clinquant du Tasse?*"

"*Le clinquant du Tasse!*" exclaimed Isaura, indignantly.

"The expression is Boileau's, Mademoiselle, in ridicule of the '*Sot de qualité*, who prefers

'*Le clinquant du Tasse à tout l'or de Virgile.*'

But for my part I have as little faith in the last as the first."

"I do not know Latin, and have therefore not read Virgil," said Isaura.

"Possibly," remarked Graham, "Monsieur does not know Italian, and has therefore not read Tasso."

"If that be meant in sarcasm," retorted Rameau, "I construe it as a compliment. A Frenchman who is contented to study the masterpieces of modern literature need learn no language and read no authors but his own."

Isaura laughed her pleasant silvery laugh. "I should admire the frankness of that boast, Monsieur, if in our talk just now you had not spoken as contemptuously of what we are accustomed to consider French masterpieces as you have done of Virgil and Tasso."

"Ah, Mademoiselle! it is not my fault if you have had teachers of taste so *rococo* as to bid you find masterpieces in the tiresome stilted tragedies of Corneille and Racine. Poetry of a court, not of a people—one simple novel, one simple stanza that probes the hidden recesses of the human heart, reveals the sores of this wretched social state, denounces the evils of superstition, kingcraft, and priestcraft, is worth a library of the rubbish which pedagogues call 'the classics.' We agree, at least, in one thing, Mademoiselle; we both do homage to the genius of your friend Madame de Grantmesnil."

"Your friend, Signorina!" cried Graham, incredulously; "is Madame de Grantmesnil your friend?"

"The dearest I have in the world."

Graham's face darkened; he turned away in silence, and in another minute vanished from the room, persuading himself that he felt not one pang of jealousy in leaving Gustave Rameau by the side of Isaura. "Her dearest friend Madame de Grantmesnil!"—he muttered.

A word now on Isaura's chief correspondent. Madame de Grantmesnil was a woman of noble birth and ample fortune. She had separated from her husband in the second year after marriage. She was a singularly eloquent writer, surpassed among contemporaries of her sex in popularity and renown only by Georges Sand.

At least as fearless as that great novelist in the frank exposition of her views, she had commenced her career in letters by a work of astonishing power and pathos, directed against the institution of marriage as regulated in Roman

Catholic communities. I do not know that it said more on this delicate subject than the English Milton has said; but then Milton did not write for a Roman Catholic community, nor adopt a style likely to captivate the working classes. Madame de Grantmesnil's first book was deemed an attack on the religion of the country, and captivated those among the working classes who had already abjured that religion. This work was followed up by others more or less in defiance of "received opinions;" some with political, some with social revolutionary aim and tendency, but always with a singular purity of style. Search all her books, and however you might revolt from her doctrine, you could not find a hazardous expression. The novels of English young ladies are naughty in comparison. Of late years, whatever might be hard or audacious in her political or social doctrines, softened itself into charm amid the golden haze of romance. Her writings had grown more and more purely artistic—poetising what is good and beautiful in the realities of life, rather than creating a false ideal out of what is vicious and deformed. Such a woman, separated young from her husband, could not enunciate such opinions and lead a life so independent and uncontrolled as Madame de Grantmesnil had done, without scandal, without calumny. Nothing, however, in her actual life, had ever been so proved against her as to lower the high position she occupied in right of birth, fortune, renown. Wherever she went she was *fêtée*—as in England foreign princes, and in America foreign authors, are *fêtés*. Those who knew her well concurred in praise of her lofty, generous, lovable qualities. Madame de Grantmesnil had known Mr. Selby; and when, at his death, Isaura, in the innocent age between childhood and youth, had been left the most sorrowful and most lonely creature on the face of the earth, this famous woman, worshipped by the rich for her intellect, adored by the poor for her beneficence, came to the orphan's friendless side, breathing love once more into her pining heart, and waking for the first time the desires of genius, the aspirations of art, in the dim self-consciousness of a soul between sleep and waking.

But, my dear Englishman, put yourself in Graham's place, and suppose that you were beginning to fall in love

with a girl whom for many good reasons you ought not to marry; suppose that in the same hour in which you were angrily conscious of jealousy on account of a man whom it wounds your self-esteem to consider a rival, the girl tells you that her dearest friend is a woman who is famed for her hostility to the institution of marriage!

CHAPTER IV.

On the same day in which Graham dined with the Savarins, M. Louvier assembled round his table the *élite* of the young Parisians who constituted the oligarchy of fashion, to meet whom he had invited his new friend the Marquis de Rochebriant. Most of them belonged to the Legitimist party—the *noblesse* of the *faubourg*; those who did not, belonged to no political party at all,—indifferent to the cares of mortal states as the gods of Epicurus. Foremost among this *Jeunesse dorée* were Alain's kinsmen, Raoul and Enguerrand de Vandemar. To these Louvier introduced him with a burly parental *bonhomie*, as if he were the head of the family. "I need not bid you, young folks, to make friends with each other. A Vandemar and a Rochebriant are not made friends—they are born friends." So saying he turned to his other guests.

Almost in an instant Alain felt his constraint melt away in the cordial warmth with which his cousins greeted him.

These young men had a striking family likeness to each other, and yet in feature, colouring, and expression, in all save that strange family likeness, they were contrasts.

Raoul was tall, and, though inclined to be slender, with sufficient breadth of shoulder to indicate no inconsiderable strength of frame. His hair worn short, and his silky beard worn long, were dark, so were his eyes, shaded by curved drooping lashes; his complexion was pale, but clear and healthful. In repose the expression of his face was that of a somewhat melancholy indolence, but in speaking it became singularly sweet, with a smile of the exquisite urbanity which no artificial politeness can bestow; it must emanate from that native high breeding which has its source in goodness of heart.

Enguerrand was fair, with curly locks of a golden chestnut. He wore no beard, only a small moustache rather darker than his hair. His complexion might in itself be

called effeminate, its bloom was so fresh and delicate, but there was so much of boldness and energy in the play of his countenance, the hardy outline of the lips, and the open breadth of the forehead, that "effeminate" was an epithet no one ever assigned to his aspect. He was somewhat under the middle height, but beautifully proportioned, carried himself well, and somehow or other did not look short even by the side of tall men. Altogether he seemed formed to be a mother's darling, and spoiled by women, yet to hold his own among men with a strength of will more evident in his look and his bearing than it was in those of his graver and statelier brother.

Both were considered by their young co-equals models in dress, but in Raoul there was no sign that care or thought upon dress had been bestowed; the simplicity of his costume was absolute and severe. On his plain shirt-front there gleamed not a stud, on his fingers there sparkled not a ring. Enguerrand, on the contrary, was not without pretension in his attire; the *broderie* in his shirt-front seemed woven by the Queen of the Fairies. His rings of turquoise and opal, his studs and wrist-buttons of pearl and brilliants, must have cost double the rental of Rochebriant, but probably they cost him nothing. He was one of those happy Lotharios to whom Calistas make constant presents. All about him was so bright that the atmosphere around seemed gayer for his presence.

In one respect at least the brothers closely resembled each other—in that exquisite graciousness of manner for which the genuine French noble is traditionally renowned—a graciousness that did not desert them even when they came reluctantly into contact with *roturiers* or republicans; but the graciousness became *égalité, fraternité* towards one of their caste and kindred.

"We must do our best to make Paris pleasant to you," said Raoul, still retaining in his grasp the hand he had taken.

"*Vilain cousin*," said the livelier Enguerrand, "to have been in Paris twenty-four hours, and without letting us know."

"Has not your father told you that I called upon him?"

"Our father," answered Raoul, "was not so savage as

to conceal that fact, but he said you were only here on business for a day or two, had declined his invitation, and would not give your address. *Pauvre père!* we scolded him well for letting you escape from us thus. My mother has not forgiven him yet; we must present you to her to-morrow. I answer for your liking her almost as much as she will like you."

Before Alain could answer dinner was announced. Alain's place at dinner was between his cousins. How pleasant they made themselves! it was the first time in which Alain had been brought into such familiar conversation with countrymen of his own rank as well as his own age. His heart warmed to them. The general talk of the other guests was strange to his ear; it ran much upon horses and races, upon the opera and the ballet; it was enlivened with satirical anecdotes of persons whose names were unknown to the Provincial—not a word was said that showed the smallest interest in politics or the slightest acquaintance with literature. The world of these well-born guests seemed one from which all that concerned the great mass of mankind was excluded, yet the talk was that which could only be found in a very polished society; in it there was not much wit, but there was a prevalent vein of gaiety, and the gaiety was never violent, the laughter was never loud; the scandals circulated might imply cynicism the most absolute, but in language the most refined. The Jockey Club of Paris has its perfume.

Raoul did not mix in the general conversation; he devoted himself pointedly to the amusement of his cousin, explaining to him the point of the anecdotes circulated, or hitting off in terse sentences the characters of the talkers.

Enguerrand was evidently of temper more vivacious than his brother, and contributed freely to the current play of light gossip and mirthful sally.

Louvier, seated between a duke and a Russian prince, said little, except to recommend a wine or an *entrée*, but kept his eye constantly on the Vandemars and Alain.

Immediately after coffee the guests departed. Before they did so, however, Raoul introduced his cousin to those of the party most distinguished by hereditary rank or social position. With these the name of Rochebriant was

too historically famous not to insure respect of its owner; they welcomed him among them as if he were their brother. The French duke claimed him as a connection by an alliance in the fourteenth century; the Russian prince had known the late Marquis, and "trusted that the son would allow him to improve into friendship the acquaintance he had formed with the father."

Those ceremonials over, Raoul linked his arm in Alain's, and said: "I am not going to release you so soon after we have caught you. You must come with me to a house in which I at least spend an hour or two every evening. I am at home there. Bah! I take no refusal. Do not suppose I carry you off to Bohemia, a country which, I am sorry to say, Enguerrand now and then visits, but which is to me as unknown as the mountains of the moon. The house I speak of is *comme il faut* to the utmost. It is that of the Contessa di Rimini—a charming Italian by marriage, but by birth and in character *on ne peut plus Française*. My mother adores her."

That dinner at M. Louvier's had already effected a great change in the mood and temper of Alain de Rochebriant; he felt, as if by magic, the sense of youth, of rank, of station, which had been so suddenly checked and stifled, warmed to life within his veins. He should have deemed himself a boor had he refused the invitation so frankly tendered.

But on reaching the *coupé* which the brothers kept in common, and seeing it only held two, he drew back.

"Nay, enter, *mon cher*," said Raoul, divining the cause of his hesitation; "Enguerrand has gone on to his club."

CHAPTER V.

"TELL me," said Raoul, when they were in the carriage, "how you came to know M. Louvier."

"He is my chief mortgagee."

"H'm! that explains it. But you might be in worse hands; the man has a character for liberality."

"Did your father mention to you my circumstances, and the reason that brings me to Paris?"

"Since you put the question point-blank, my dear cousin, he did."

"He told you how poor I am, and how keen must be my life-long struggle to keep Rochebriant as the home of my race."

"He told us all that could make us still more respect the Marquis de Rochebriant, and still more eagerly long to know our cousin and the head of our house," answered Raoul, with a certain nobleness of tone and manner.

Alain pressed his kinsman's hand with grateful emotion.

"Yet," he said, falteringly, "your father agreed with me that my circumstances would not allow me to——"

"Bah!" interrupted Raoul with a gentle laugh; "my father is a very clever man, doubtless, but he knows only the world of his own day, nothing of the world of ours. I and Enguerrand will call on you to-morrow, to take you to my mother, and before doing so, to consult as to affairs in general. On this last matter Enguerrand is an oracle. Here we are at the Contessa's"

CHAPTER VI.

The Contessa di Rimini received her visitors in a boudoir furnished with much apparent simplicity, but a simplicity by no means inexpensive. The draperies were but of chintz, and the walls covered with the same material, a lively pattern, in which the prevalents were rose-colour and white; but the ornaments on the mantelpiece, the china stored in the cabinets or arranged on the shelves, the small nick-nacks scattered on the tables, were costly rarities of art.

The Contessa herself was a woman who had somewhat passed her thirtieth year, not strikingly handsome, but exquisitely pretty. "There is," said a great French writer, "only one way in which a woman can be handsome, but a hundred thousand ways in which she can be pretty;" and it would be impossible to reckon up the number of ways in which Adeline di Rimini carried off the prize in prettiness.

Yet it would be unjust to the personal attractions of the Contessa to class them all under the word "prettiness." When regarded more attentively, there was an expression in her countenance that might almost be called divine, it spoke so unmistakably of a sweet nature and an untroubled soul. An English poet once described her by repeating the old lines,—

> "Her face is like the milky way i' the sky,—
> A meeting of gentle lights without a name."

She was not alone; an elderly lady sate on an arm-chair by the fire, engaged in knitting; and a man, also elderly, and whose dress proclaimed him an ecclesiastic, sate at the opposite corner, with a large Angora cat on his lap.

"I present to you, Madame," said Raoul, "my new-found cousin, the seventeenth Marquis de Rochebriant, whom I am proud to consider, on the male side, the head of our house, representing its eldest branch: welcome

him for my sake—in future he will be welcome for his own."

The Contessa replied very graciously to this introduction, and made room for Alain on the divan from which she had risen.

The old lady looked up from her knitting; the ecclesiastic removed the cat from his lap. Said the old lady, "I announce myself to M. le Marquis; I knew his mother well enough to be invited to his christening; otherwise I have no pretension to the acquaintance of *si beau* a cavalier,—being old—rather deaf—very stupid—exceedingly poor——"

"And, interrupted Raoul, "the woman in all Paris, the most adored for *bonté*, and consulted for *savoir vivre* by the young cavaliers whom she deigns to receive. Alain, I present you to Madame de Maury, the widow of a distinguished author and academician, and the daughter of the brave Henri de Gerval, who fought for the good cause in La Vendée. I present you also to the Abbé Vertpré, who has passed his life in the vain endeavour to make other men as good as himself."

"Base flatterer!" said the Abbé, pinching Raoul's ear with one hand, while he extended the other to Alain. "Do not let your cousin frighten you from knowing me, M. le Marquis; when he was my pupil, he so convinced me of the incorrigibility of perverse human nature, that I now chiefly address myself to the moral improvement of the brute creation. Ask the Contessa if I have not achieved a *beau succès* with her Angora cat. Three months ago that creature had the two worst propensities of men. He was at once savage and mean; he bit, he stole. Does he ever bite now? No. Does he ever steal? No. Why? I have awakened in that cat the dormant conscience, and that done, the conscience regulates his actions: once made aware of the difference between wrong and right, the cat maintains it unswervingly, as if it were a law of nature. But if, with prodigious labour, one does awaken conscience in a human sinner, it has no steady effect on his conduct—he continues to sin all the same. Mankind at Paris, Monsieur le Marquis, is divided between two classes—one bites and the other steals: shun both; devote yourself to cats."

The Abbé delivered this oration with a gravity of mien and tone which made it difficult to guess whether he spoke in sport or in earnest—in simple playfulness or with latent sarcasm.

But on the brow and in the eye of the priest there was a general expression of quiet benevolence, which made Alain incline to the belief that he was only speaking as a pleasant humorist; and the Marquis replied gaily—

"Monsieur l'Abbé, admitting the superior virtue of cats, when taught by so intelligent a preceptor, still the business of human life is not transacted by cats; and since men must deal with men, permit me, as a preliminary caution, to inquire in which class I must rank yourself. Do you bite or do you steal?"

This sally, which showed that the Marquis was already shaking off his provincial reserve, met with great success. Raoul and the Contessa laughed merrily; Madame de Maury clapped her hands, and cried "*Bien!*"

The Abbé replied, with unmoved gravity, "Both. I am a priest; it is my duty to bite the bad and steal from the good, as you will see, M. le Marquis, if you will glance at this paper."

Here he handed to Alain a memorial on behalf of an afflicted family who had been burnt out of their home, and reduced from comparative ease to absolute want. There was a list appended of some twenty subscribers, the last being the Contessa, fifty francs, and Madame de Maury, five.

"Allow me, Marquis," said the Abbé, "to steal from you; bless you twofold, *mon fils!*" (taking the napoleon Alain extended to him)—"first for your charity—secondly, for the effect of its example upon the heart of your cousin. Raoul de Vandemar, stand and deliver. Bah!—what! only ten francs."

Raoul made a sign to the Abbé, unperceived by the rest, as he answered, "Abbé, I should excel your expectations of my career if I always continue worth half as much as my cousin."

Alain felt to the bottom of his heart the delicate tact of his richer kinsman in giving less than himself, and the Abbé replied, "Niggard, you are pardoned. Humility is a more difficult virtue to p oduce than charity, and in

your case an instance of it is so rare that it merits encouragement."

The "tea equipage" was now served in what at Paris is called the English fashion; the Contessa presided over it, the guests gathered round the table, and the evening passed away in the innocent gaiety of a domestic circle. The talk, if not especially intellectual, was at least not fashionable — books were not discussed, neither were scandals; yet somehow or other it was cheery and animated, like that of a happy family in a country-house. Alain thought still the better of Raoul that, Parisian though he was, he could appreciate the charm of an evening so innocently spent.

On taking leave, the Contessa gave Alain a general invitation to drop in whenever he was not better engaged.

"I except only the opera nights," said she. "My husband has gone to Milan on his affairs, and during his absence I do not go to parties; the opera I cannot resist."

Raoul set Alain down at his lodgings. "*Au revoir;* tomorrow at one o'clock expect Enguerrand and myself."

CHAPTER VII.

Raoul and Enguerrand called on Alain at the hour fixed.

"In the first place," said Raoul, "I must beg you to accept my mother's regrets that she cannot receive you to-day. She and the Contessa belong to a society of ladies formed for visiting the poor, and this is their day; but to-morrow you must dine with us *en famille*. Now to business. Allow me to light my cigar while you confide the whole state of affairs to Enguerrand: whatever he counsels, I am sure to approve."

Alain, as briefly as he could, stated his circumstances, his mortgages, and the hopes which his *avoué* had encouraged him to place in the friendly disposition of M. Louvier. When he had concluded, Enguerrand mused for a few moments before replying. At last he said, "Will you trust me to call on Louvier on your behalf? I shall but inquire if he is inclined to take on himself the other mortgages; and if so, on what terms. Our relationship gives me the excuse for my interference; and to say truth, I have had much familiar intercourse with the man. I too am a speculator, and have often profited by Louvier's advice. You may ask what can be his object in serving me; he can gain nothing by it. To this I answer, the key to his good offices is in his character. Audacious though he be as a speculator, he is wonderfully prudent as a politician. This *belle France* of ours is like a stage tumbler; one can never be sure whether it will stand on its head or its feet. Louvier very wisely wishes to feel himself safe whatever party comes uppermost. He has no faith in the duration of the Empire; and as, at all events, the Empire will not confiscate his millions, he takes no trouble in conciliating Imperialists. But on the principle which induces certain savages to worship the devil and neglect the *bon Dieu*, because the devil is spiteful and the *bon Dieu* is too beneficent to injure them, Louvier, at heart detesting as

well as dreading a republic, lays himself out to secure friends with the Republicans of all classes, and pretends to espouse their cause. Next to them, he is very conciliatory to the Orleanists. Lastly, though he thinks the Legitimists have no chance, he desires to keep well with the nobles of that party, because they exercise a considerable influence over that sphere of opinion which belongs to fashion; for fashion is never powerless in Paris. Raoul and myself are no mean authorities in *salons* and clubs; and a good word from us is worth having.

"Besides, Louvier himself in his youth set up for a dandy; and that deposed ruler of dandies, our unfortunate kinsman, Victor de Mauléon, shed some of his own radiance on the money-lender's son. But when Victor's star was eclipsed, Louvier ceased to gleam. The dandies cut him. In his heart he exults that the dandies now throng to his *soirées*. *Bref*, the *millionnaire* is especially civil to me—the more so as I know intimately two or three eminent journalists; and Louvier takes pains to plant garrisons in the press. I trust I have explained the grounds on which I may be a better diplomatist to employ than your *avoué;* and with your leave I will go to Louvier at once."

"Let him go," said Raoul. "Enguerrand never fails in anything he undertakes, especially," he added, with a smile half sad, half tender, "when one wishes to replenish one's purse."

"I too gratefully grant such an ambassador all powers to treat," said Alain. "I am only ashamed to consign to him a post so much beneath his genius," and his "birth" he was about to add, but wisely checked himself. Enguerrand said, shrugging his shoulders, "You can't do me a greater kindness than by setting my wits at work. I fall a martyr to *ennui* when I am not in action," he said, and was gone.

"It makes me very melancholy at times," said Raoul, flinging away the end of his cigar, "to think that a man so clever and so energetic as Enguerrand should be as much excluded from the service of his country as if he were an Iroquois Indian. He would have made a great diplomatist."

"Alas!" replied Alain, with a sigh, "I begin to doubt whether we Legitimists are justified in maintaining a use-

less loyalty to a sovereign who renders us morally exiles in the land of our birth."

"I have no doubt on the subject," said Raoul. "We are not justified on the score of policy, but we have no option at present on the score of honour. We should gain so much for ourselves if we adopted the State livery and took the State wages that no man would esteem us as patriots; we should only be despised as apostates. So long as Henry V. lives, and does not resign his claim, we cannot be active citizens; we must be mournful lookers-on. But what matters it? We nobles of the old race are becoming rapidly extinct. Under any form of government likely to be established in France we are equally doomed. The French people, aiming at an impossible equality, will never again tolerate a race of *gentilshommes*. They cannot prevent, without destroying commerce and capital altogether, a quick succession of men of the day, who form nominal aristocracies much more opposed to equality than any hereditary class of nobles. But they refuse these fleeting substitutes of born patricians all permanent stake in the country, since whatever estate they buy must be subdivided at their death. My poor Alain, you are making it the one ambition of your life to preserve to your posterity the home and lands of your forefathers. How is that possible, even supposing you could redeem the mortgages? You marry some day—you have children, and Rochebriant must then be sold to pay for their separate portions. How this condition of things, while rendering us so ineffective to perform the normal functions of a *noblesse* in public life, affects us in private life, may be easily conceived.

"Condemned to a career of pleasure and frivolity, we can scarcely escape from the contagion of extravagant luxury which forms the vice of the time. With grand names to keep up, and small fortunes whereon to keep them, we readily incur embarrassment and debt. Then neediness conquers pride. We cannot be great merchants, but we can be small gamblers on the Bourse, or, thanks to the *Crédit Mobilier*, imitate a cabinet minister, and keep a shop under another name. Perhaps you have heard that Enguerrand and I keep a shop. Pray, buy your gloves there. Strange fate for men whose ancestors fought in the first Crusade—*mais que voulez vous?*"

"I was told of the shop," said Alain, "but the moment I knew you I disbelieved the story."

"Quite true. Shall I confide to you why we resorted to that means of finding ourselves in pocket-money? My father gives us rooms in his hotel; the use of his table, which we do not much profit by; and an allowance, on which we could not live as young men of our class live at Paris. Enguerrand had his means of spending pocket-money, I mine; but it came to the same thing—the pockets were emptied. We incurred debts. Two years ago my father straitened himself to pay them, saying, 'The next time you come to me with debts, however small, you must pay them yourselves, or you must marry, and leave it to me to find you wives.' This threat appalled us both. A month afterwards, Enguerrand made a lucky hit at the Bourse, and proposed to invest the proceeds in a shop. I resisted as long as I could, but Enguerrand triumphed over me, as he always does. He found an excellent deputy in a *bonne* who had nursed us in childhood, and married a journeyman perfumer who understands the business. It answers well; we are not in debt, and we have preserved our freedom."

After these confessions Raoul went away, and Alain fell into a mournful reverie, from which he was roused by a loud ring at his bell. He opened the door, and beheld M. Louvier. The burly financier was much out of breath after making so steep an ascent. It was in gasps that he muttered, "*Bonjour;* excuse me if I derange you." Then entering and seating himself on a chair, he took some minutes to recover speech, rolling his eyes staringly round the meagre, unluxurious room, and then concentrating their gaze upon its occupier.

"*Peste*, my dear Marquis!" he said at last, "I hope the next time I visit you the ascent may be less arduous. One would think you were in training to ascend the Himalaya."

The haughty noble writhed under this jest, and the spirit inborn in his order spoke in his answer.

"I am accustomed to dwell on heights, M. Louvier; the castle of Rochebriant is not on a level with the town."

An angry gleam shot from the eyes of the *millionnaire*, but there was no other sign of displeasure in his answer.

"*Bien dit, mon cher;* how you remind me of your father!

Now, give me leave to speak on affairs. I have seen your cousin Enguerrand de Vandemar. *Homme de moyens* though *joli garçon*. He proposed that you should call on me. I said 'no' to the *cher petit* Enguerrand—a visit from me was due to you. To cut matters short, M. Gandrin has allowed me to look into your papers. I was disposed to serve you from the first—I am still more disposed to serve you now. I undertake to pay off all your other mortgages, and become sole mortgagee, and on terms that I have jotted down on this paper, and which I hope will content you."

He placed a paper in Alain's hand, and took out a box, from which he extracted a jujube, placed it in his mouth, folded his hands, and reclined back in his chair, with his eyes half closed, as if exhausted alike by his ascent and his generosity.

In effect, the terms were unexpectedly liberal. The reduced interest on the mortgages would leave the Marquis an income of £1000 a-year instead of £400. Louvier proposed to take on himself the legal cost of transfer, and to pay to the Marquis 25,000 francs, on the completion of the deed, as a bonus. The mortgage did not exempt the building-land, as Hébert desired. In all else it was singularly advantageous, and Alain could but feel a thrill of grateful delight at an offer by which his stinted income was raised to comparative affluence.

"Well, Marquis," said Louvier, "what does the castle say to the town?"

"M. Louvier," answered Alain, extending his hand with cordial eagerness, "accept my sincere apologies for the indiscretion of my metaphor. Poverty is proverbially sensitive to jests on it. I owe it to you if I cannot hereafter make that excuse for any words of mine that may displease you. The terms you propose are most liberal, and I close with them at once."

"*Bon*," said Louvier, shaking vehemently the hand offered to him; "I will take the paper to Gandrin, and instruct him accordingly. And now, may I attach a condition to the agreement which is not put down on paper? It may have surprised you perhaps that I should propose a gratuity of 25,000 francs on completion of the contract. It is a droll thing to do, and not in the ordinary way of business, therefore I must explain. Marquis; pardon the liberty

I take, but you have inspired me with an interest in your future. With your birth, connections, and figure, you should push your way in the world far and fast. But you can't do so in a province. You must find your opening at Paris. I wish you to spend a year in the capital, and live, not extravagantly, like a *nuveau riche*, but in a way not unsuited to your rank, and permitting you all the social advantages that belong to it. These 25,000 francs, in addition to your improved income, will enable you to gratify my wish in this respect. Spend the money in Paris: you will want every *sou* of it in the course of the year. It will be money well spent. Take my advice, *cher Marquis. Au plaisir.*"

The financier bowed himself out. The young Marquis forgot all the mournful reflections with which Raoul's conversation had inspired him. He gave a new touch to his toilette, and sallied forth with the air of a man on whose morning of life a sun heretofore clouded has burst forth and bathed the landscape in its light.

CHAPTER VIII.

SINCE the evening spent at the Savarins', Graham had seen no more of Isaura. He had avoided all chance of seeing her—in fact, the jealousy with which he had viewed her manner towards Rameau, and the angry amaze with which he had heard her proclaim her friendship for Madame de Grantmesnil, served to strengthen the grave and secret reasons which made him desire to keep his heart yet free and his hand yet unpledged. But, alas! the heart was enslaved already. It was under the most fatal of all spells —first love conceived at first sight. He was wretched; and in his wretchedness his resolves became involuntarily weakened. He found himself making excuses for the beloved. What cause had he, after all, for that jealousy of the young poet which had so offended him? and if, in her youth and inexperience, Isaura had made her dearest friend of a great writer by whose genius she might be dazzled, and of whose opinions she might scarcely be aware, was it a crime that necessitated her eternal banishment from the reverence which belongs to all manly love? Certainly he found no satisfactory answers to such self-questionings. And then those grave reasons known only to himself, and never to be confided to another—why he should yet reserve his hand unpledged—were not so imperative as to admit of no compromise. They might entail a sacrifice, and not a small one to a man of Graham's views and ambition. But what is love if it can think any sacrifice, short of duty and honour, too great to offer up unknown, uncomprehended, to the one beloved? Still, while thus softened in his feelings towards Isaura, he became, perhaps in consequence of such softening, more and more restlessly impatient to fulfil the object for which he had come to Paris, the great step towards which was the discovery of the undiscoverable Louise Duval.

He had written more than once to M. Renard since the interview with that functionary already recorded, demand-

ing whether Renard had not made some progress in the research on which he was employed, and had received short unsatisfactory replies preaching patience and implying hope.

The plain truth, however, was, that M. Renard had taken no further pains in the matter. He considered it utter waste of time and thought to attempt a discovery to which the traces were so faint and so obsolete. If the discovery were effected, it must be by one of those chances which occur without labour or forethought of our own. He trusted only to such a chance in continuing the charge he had undertaken. But during the last day or two Graham had become yet more impatient than before, and peremptorily requested another visit from this dilatory confidant.

In that visit, finding himself pressed hard, and though naturally willing, if possible, to retain a client unusually generous, yet being, on the whole, an honest member of his profession, and feeling it to be somewhat unfair to accept large remuneration for doing nothing, M. Renard said frankly, "Monsieur, this affair is beyond me; the keenest agent of our police could make nothing of it. Unless you can tell me more than you have done, I am utterly without a clue. I resign, therefore, the task with which you honoured me, willing to resume it again if you can give me information that could render me of use."

"What sort of information?"

"At least the names of some of the lady's relations who may yet be living."

"But it strikes me that, if I could get at that piece of knowledge, I should not require the services of the police. The relations would tell me what had become of Louise Duval quite as readily as they would tell a police agent."

"Quite true, Monsieur. It would really be picking your pockets if I did not at once retire from your service. Nay, Monsieur, pardon me, no further payments; I have already accepted too much. Your most obedient servant."

Graham, left alone, fell into a very gloomy reverie. He could not but be sensible of the difficulties in the way of the object which had brought him to Paris, with somewhat

sanguine expectations of success founded on a belief in the omniscience of the Parisian police, which is only to be justified when they have to deal with a murderess or a political incendiary. But the name of Louise Duval is about as common in France as that of Mary Smith in England; and the English reader may judge what would be the likely result of inquiring through the ablest of our detectives after some Mary Smith of whom you could give little more information than that she was the daughter of a drawing-master who had died twenty years ago, that it was about fifteen years since anything had been heard of her, that you could not say if, through marriage or for other causes, she had changed her name or not, and you had reasons for declining resort to public advertisements. In the course of inquiry so instituted, the probability would be that you might hear of a great many Mary Smiths, in the pursuit of whom your *employé* would lose all sight and scent of the one Mary Smith for whom the chase was instituted.

In the midst of Graham's despairing reflections his *laquais* announced M. Frederic Lemercier.

"*Cher* Grarm-Varn. A thousand pardons if I disturb you at this late hour of the evening; but you remember the request you made me when you first arrived in Paris this season?"

"Of course I do—in case you should ever chance in your wide round of acquaintance to fall in with a Madame or Mademoiselle Duval of about the age of forty, or a year or so less, to let me know: and you did fall in with two ladies of that name, but they were not the right one—not the person whom my friend begged me to discover—both much too young."

"*Eh bien, mon cher.* If you will come with me to the *bal champêtre* in the Champs Elysées to-night, I can show you a third Madame Duval; her Christian name is Louise, too, of the age you mention—though she does her best to look younger, and is still very handsome. You said your Duval was handsome. It was only last evening that I met this lady at a *soirée* given by Mademoiselle Julie Caumartin, *coryphée distinguée*, in love with young Rameau."

"In love with young Rameau? I am very glad to hear it. He returns the love?"

"I suppose so. He seems very proud of it. But *à propos* of Madame Duval, she has been long absent from Paris—just returned—and looking out for conquests. She says she has a great *penchant* for the English; promises me to be at this ball—come."

"Hearty thanks, my dear Lemercier. I am at your service."

CHAPTER IX.

The *bal champêtre* was gay and brilliant, as such festal scenes are at Paris. A lovely night in the midst of May—lamps below and stars above: the society mixed, of course. Evidently, when Graham has singled out Frederic Lemercier from all his acquaintances at Paris, to conjoin with the official aid of M. Renard in search of the mysterious lady, he had conjectured the probability that she might be found in the Bohemian world so familiar to Frederic; if not as an inhabitant, at least as an explorer. Bohemia was largely represented at the *bal champêtre*, but not without a fair sprinkling of what we call the "respectable classes," especially English and Americans, who brought their wives there to take care of them. Frenchmen, not needing such care, prudently left their wives at home. Among the Frenchmen of station were the Comte de Passy and the Vicomte de Brézé.

On first entering the gardens, Graham's eye was attracted and dazzled by a brilliant form. It was standing under a festoon of flowers extended from tree to tree, and a gas jet opposite shone full upon the face—the face of a girl in all the freshness of youth. If the freshness owed anything to art, the art was so well disguised that it seemed nature. The beauty of the countenance was Hebe-like, joyous, and radiant, and yet one could not look at the girl without a sentiment of deep mournfulness. She was surrounded by a group of young men, and the ring of her laugh jarred upon Graham's ear. He pressed Frederic's arm, and directing his attention to the girl, asked who she was.

"Who? Don't you know? That is Julie Caumartin. A little while ago her equipage was the most admired in the Bois, and great ladies condescended to copy her dress or her *coiffure*. But she has lost her splendour, and dismissed the rich admirer who supplied the fuel for its blaze, since she fell in love with Gustave Rameau. Doubtless she

is expecting him to-night. You ought to know her; shall I present you?"

"No," answered Graham, with a compassionate expression in his manly face. "So young; seemingly so gay. How I pity her!"

"What! for throwing herself away on Rameau? True. There is a great deal of good in that girl's nature, if she had been properly trained. Rameau wrote a pretty poem on her which turned her head and won her heart, in which she is styled the 'Ondine of Paris,'—a nymph-like type of Paris itself."

"Vanishing type, like her namesake; born of the spray, and vanishing soon into the deep," said Graham. "Pray go and look for the Duval; you will find me seated yonder."

Graham passed into a retired alley, and threw himself on a solitary bench, while Lemercier went in search of Madame Duval. In a few minutes the Frenchman reappeared. By his side was a lady well dressed, and as she passed under the lamps Graham perceived that, though of a certain age, she was undeniably handsome. His heart beat more quickly. Surely this was the Louise Duval he sought.

He rose from his seat, and was presented in due form to the lady, with whom Frederic then discreetly left him.

"Monsieur Lemercier tells me that you think that we were once acquainted with each other."

"Nay, Madame; I should not fail to recognise you were that the case. A friend of mine had the honour of knowing a lady of your name; and should I be fortunate enough to meet that lady, I am charged with a commission that may not be unwelcome to her. M. Lemercier tells me your *nom de baptême* is Louise."

"Louise Corinne, Monsieur."

"And I presume that Duval is the name you take from your parents?"

"No; my father's name was Bernard. I married, when I was a mere child, M. Duval, in the wine trade at Bordeaux."

"Ah, indeed!" said Graham, much disappointed, but looking at her with a keen, searching eye, which she met with a decided frankness. Evidently, in his judgment, she was speaking the truth.

"You know English, I think, Madame," he resumed, addressing her in that language.

"A leetle—speak *un peu*."

"Only a little?"

Madame Duval looked puzzled, and replied in French, with a laugh. "Is it that you were told that I spoke English by your countryman, Milord Sare Boulby? *Petit scélérat*, I hope he is well. He sends you a commission for me—so he ought: he behaved to me like a monster."

"Alas! I know nothing of Milord Sir Boulby. Were you never in England yourself?"

"Never"—with a coquettish side-glance—"I should like so much to go. I have a foible for the English in spite of that *vilain petit* Boulby. Who is it gave you the commission for me? Ha! I guess—le Capitaine Nelton."

"No. What year, Madame, if not impertinent, were you at Aix-la-Chapelle?"

"You mean Baden? I was there seven years ago, when I met le Capitaine Nelton—*bel homme aux cheveux rouges*."

"But you have been at Aix?"

"Never."

"I have, then, been mistaken, Madame, and have only to offer my most humble apologies."

"But perhaps you will favour me with a visit, and we may on further conversation find that you are not mistaken. I can't stay now, for I am engaged to dance with the Belgian of whom, no doubt, M. Lemercier has told you."

"No, Madame, he has not."

"Well, then, he will tell you. The Belgian is very jealous. But I am always at home between three and four; this is my card."

Graham eagerly took the card, and exclaimed, "Is this your own handwriting, Madame?"

"Yes, indeed."

"*Très belle écriture*," said Graham, and receded with a ceremonious bow. "Anything so unlike *her* handwriting. Another disappointment," muttered the Englishman as the lady went back to the ball.

A few minutes later Graham joined Lemercier, who was talking with De Passy and De Brézé.

"Well," said Lemercier, when his eye rested on Graham, "I hit the right nail on the head this time, eh?"

Graham shook his head.

"What! is she not the right Louise Duval?"

"Certainly not."

The Count de Passy overheard the name, and turned. "Louise Duval," he said; "does Monsieur Vane know a Louise Duval?"

"No; but a friend asked me to inquire after a lady of that name whom he had met many years ago at Paris." The Count mused a moment, and said, "Is it possible that your friend knew the family De Mauléon?"

"I really can't say. What then?"

"The old Vicomte de Mauléon was one of my most intimate associates. In fact, our houses are connected. And he was extremely grieved, poor man, when his daughter Louise married her drawing-master, Auguste Duval."

"Her drawing-master, Auguste Duval? Pray say on. I think the Louise Duval my friend knew must have been her daughter. She was the only child of a drawing-master or artist named Auguste Duval, and probably enough her Christian name would have been derived from her mother. A Mademoiselle de Mauléon, then, married M. Auguste Duval?"

"Yes; the old Vicomte had espoused *en premières noces* Mademoiselle Camille de Chavigny, a lady of birth equal to his own,—had by her one daughter, Louise. I recollect her well,—a plain girl, with a high nose and a sour expression. She was just of age when the first Vicomtesse died, and by the marriage settlement she succeeded at once to her mother's fortune, which was not large. The Vicomte was, however, so poor that the loss of that income was no trifle to him. Though much past fifty, he was still very handsome. Men of that generation did not age soon, Monsieur," said the Count, expanding his fine chest and laughing exultingly.

"He married, *en secondes noces*, a lady of still higher birth than the first, and with a much larger *dot*. Louise was indignant at this, hated her stepmother; and when a son was born by the second marriage she left the paternal roof, went to reside with an old female relative near the Luxembourg, and there married this drawing-master. Her

father and the family did all they could to prevent it; but in these democratic days a woman who has attained her majority can, if she persist in her determination, marry to please herself and disgrace her ancestors. After that *mésalliance* her father never would see her again. I tried in vain to soften him. All his parental affections settled on his handsome Victor. Ah! you are too young to have known Victor de Mauléon during his short reign at Paris —as *roi des viveurs*."

"Yes, he was before my time; but I have heard of him as a young man of great fashion—said to be very clever, a duellist, and a sort of Don Juan."

"Exactly."

"And then I remember vaguely to have heard that he committed, or was said to have committed, some villanous action connected with a great lady's jewels, and to have left Paris in consequence."

"Ah, yes—a sad scrape. At that time there was a political crisis; we were under a Republic; anything against a noble was believed. But I am sure Victor de Mauléon was not the man to commit a larceny. However, it is quite true that he left Paris, and I don't know what has become of him since." Here he touched De Brézé, who, though still near, had not been listening to this conversation, but interchanging jest and laughter with Lemercier on the motley scene of the dance.

"De Brézé, have you ever heard what became of poor dear Victor de Mauléon?—you knew him."

"Knew him? I should think so. Who could be in the great world and not know *le beau* Victor? No; after he vanished I never heard more of him—doubtless long since dead. A good-hearted fellow in spite of all his sins."

"My dear M. de Brézé, did you know his half-sister?" asked Graham—"a Madame Duval?"

"No. I never heard he had a half-sister. Halt there: I recollect that I met Victor once, in the garden at Versailles walking arm-in-arm with the most beautiful girl I ever saw; and when I complimented him afterwards at the Jockey Club on his new conquest, he replied very gravely that the young lady was his niece. 'Niece!' said I; 'why, there can't be more than five or six years between you.' 'About that, I suppose,' said he; 'my half-sister, her

mother, was more than twenty years older than I at the time of my birth.' I doubted the truth of his story at the time; but since you say he really had a sister, my doubt wronged him."

"Have you never seen that same young lady since?"

"Never."

"How many years ago was this?"

"Let me see—about twenty or twenty-one years ag How time flies!"

Graham still continued to question, but could learn no farther particulars. He turned to quit the gardens just as the band was striking up for a fresh dance, a wild German waltz air, and mingled with that German music his ear caught the sprightly sounds of the French laugh, one laugh distinguished from the rest by a more genuine ring of light-hearted joy—the laugh that he had heard on entering the gardens, and the sound of which had then saddened him. Looking toward the quarter from which it came, he again saw the "Ondine of Paris." She was not now the centre of a group. She had just found Gustave Rameau; and was clinging to his arm with a look of happiness in her face, frank and innocent as a child's. And so they passed amid the dancers down a solitary lamplit alley, till lost to the Englishman's lingering gaze.

CHAPTER X.

THE next morning Graham sent again for M. Renard.

"Well," he cried, when that dignitary appeared and took a seat beside him; "chance has favoured me."

"I always counted on chance, Monsieur. Chance has more wit in its little finger than the Paris police in its whole body."

"I have ascertained the relations, on the mother's side, of Louise Duval, and the only question is how to get at them."

Here Graham related what he had heard, and ended by saying, "This Victor de Mauléon is therefore my Louise Duval's uncle. He was, no doubt, taking charge of her in the year that the persons interested in her discovery lost sight of her in Paris; and surely he must know what became of her afterwards."

"Very probably; and chance may befriend us yet in the discovery of Victor de Mauléon. You seem not to know the particulars of that story about the jewels which brought him into some connection with the police, and resulted in his disappearance from Paris."

"No; tell me the particulars."

"Victor de Mauléon was heir to some 60,000 or 70,000 francs a year, chiefly on the mother's side; for his father, though the representative of one of the most ancient houses in Normandy, was very poor, having little of his own except the emoluments of an appointment in the Court of Louis Philippe.

"But before, by the death of his parents, Victor came into that inheritance, he very largely forestalled it. His tastes were magnificent. He took to 'sport'—kept a famous stud, was a great favourite with the English, and spoke their language fluently. Indeed he was considered very accomplished, and of considerable intellectual powers. It was generally said that some day or other, when he had sown his wild oats, he would, if he took to politics, be an

eminent man. Altogether he was a very strong creature. That was a very strong age under Louis Philippe. The *viveurs* of Paris were fine types for the heroes of Dumas and Sue—full of animal life and spirits. Victor de Maulcon was a romance of Dumas—incarnated."

"M. Renard, forgive me that I did not before do justice to your taste in polite literature."

"Monsieur, a man in my profession does not attain even to my humble eminence if he be not something else than a professional. He must study mankind wherever they are described—even in *les romans*. To return to Victor de Maulcon. Though he was a 'sportman,' a gambler,' a Don Juan, a duellist, nothing was ever said against his honour. On the contrary, on matters of honour he was a received oracle; and even though he had fought several duels (that was the age of duels), and was reported without a superior, almost without an equal, in either weapon—the sword or the pistol—he is said never to have wantonly provoked an encounter, and to have so used his skill that he contrived never to slay, nor even gravely to wound, an antagonist.

"I remember one instance of his generosity in this respect, for it was much talked of at the time. One of your countrymen, who had never handled a fencing-foil nor fired a pistol, took offence at something M. de Maulcon had said in disparagement of the Duke of Wellington, and called him out. Victor de Maulcon accepted the challenge, discharged his pistol, not in the air—that might have been an affront—but so as to be wide of the mark, walked up to the lines to be shot at, and when missed, said—'Excuse the susceptibility of a Frenchman, loath to believe that his countryman can be beaten save by accident, and accept every apology one gentleman can make to another for having forgotten the respect due to one of the most renowned of your national heroes.' The Englishman's name was Vane. Could it have been your father?"

"Very probably; just like my father to call out any man who insulted the honour of his country, as represented by its men. I hope the two combatants became friends?"

"That I never heard; the duel was over—there my story ends."

"Pray go on."

"One day—it was in the midst of political events which would have silenced most subjects of private gossip—the *beau monde* was startled by the news that the Vicomte (he was then, by his father's death, Vicomte) de Mauléon had been given into the custody of the police on the charge of stealing the jewels of the Duchesse de —— (the wife of a distinguished foreigner). It seems that some days before this event, the Duc, wishing to make Madame his spouse an agreeable surprise, had resolved to have a diamond necklace belonging to her, and which was of setting so old-fashioned that she had not lately worn it, reset for her birthday. He therefore secretly possessed himself of the key to an iron safe in a cabinet adjoining her dressing-room (in which safe her more valuable jewels were kept), and took from it the necklace. Imagine his dismay when the jeweller in the Rue Vivienne to whom he carried it, recognised the pretended diamonds as imitation paste which he himself had some days previously inserted into an empty setting brought to him by a Monsieur with whose name he was unacquainted. The Duchesse was at that time in delicate health; and as the Duc's suspicions naturally fell on the servants, especially on the *femme de chambre*, who was in great favour with his wife, he did not like to alarm Madame, nor through her to put the servants on their guard. He resolved, therefore, to place the matter in the hands of the famous * * *, who was then the pride and the ornament of the Parisian police. And the very night afterwards the Vicomte de Mauléon was caught and apprehended in the cabinet where the jewels were kept, and to which he had got access by a false key, or at least a duplicate key, found in his possession. I should observe that M. de Mauléon occupied the *entresol* in the same hotel in which the upper rooms were devoted to the Duc and Duchesse and their suite. As soon as this charge against the Vicomte was made known (and it was known the next morning), the extent of his debts and the utterness of his ruin (before scarcely conjectured or wholly unheeded) became public through the medium of the journals, and furnished an obvious motive for the crime of which he was accused. We Parisians, Monsieur, are subject to the most startling reactions of feeling. The men we adore one day

we execrate the next. The Vicomte passed at once from the popular admiration one bestows on a hero, to the popular contempt with which one regards a petty larcener. Society wondered how it had ever condescended to receive into its bosom the gambler, the duellist, the Don Juan. However, one compensation in the way of amusement he might still afford to society for the grave injuries he had done it. Society would attend his trial, witness his demeanour at the bar, and watch the expression of his face when he was sentenced to the galleys. But, Monsieur, this wretch completed the measure of his iniquities. He was not tried at all. The Duc and Duchesse quitted Paris for Spain, and the Duc instructed his lawyer to withdraw his charge, stating his conviction of the Vicomte's complete innocence of any other offence than that which he himself had confessed."

"What did the Vicomte confess? you omitted to state that."

"The Vicomte, when apprehended, confessed that, smitten by an insane passion for the Duchesse, which she had, on his presuming to declare it, met with indignant scorn, he had taken advantage of his lodgment in the same house to admit himself into the cabinet adjoining her dressing-room by means of a key which he had procured, made from an impression of the key-hole taken in wax.

"No evidence in support of any other charge against the Vicomte was forthcoming—nothing, in short, beyond the *infraction du domicile* caused by the madness of youthful love, and for which there was no prosecution. The law, therefore, could have little to say against him. But society was more rigid; and, exceedingly angry to find that a man who had been so conspicuous for luxury should prove to be a pauper, insisted on believing that M. de Maulèon was guilty of the meaner, though not perhaps, in the eyes of husbands and fathers, the more heinous, of the two offences. I presume that the Vicomte felt that he had got into a dilemma from which no pistol-shot or sword-thrust could free him, for he left Paris abruptly, and has not since reappeared. The sale of his stud and effects sufficed, I believe, to pay his debts, for I will do him the justice to say that they were paid."

"But though the Vicomte de Maulèon has disappeared,

he must have left relations at Paris, who would perhaps know what has become of him and of his niece."

"I doubt it. He had no very near relations. The nearest was an old *célibataire* of the same name, from whom he had some expectations, but who died shortly after this *esclandre*, and did not name the Vicomte in his will. M. Victor had numerous connections among the highest families—the Rochebriants, Chavignys, Vandemars, Passys, Beauvilliers. But they are not likely to have retained any connection with a ruined *vaurien*, and still less with a niece of his who was the child of a drawing-master. But now you have given me a clue, I will try to follow it up. We must find the Vicomte, and I am not without hope of doing so. Pardon me if I decline to say more at present. I would not raise false expectations. But in a week or two I will have the honour to call again upon Monsieur."

"Wait one instant. You have really a hope of discovering M. de Mauléon?"

"Yes. I cannot say more at present."

M. Renard departed.

Still that hope, however faint it might prove, served to re-animate Graham; and with that hope his heart, as if a load had been lifted from its mainspring, returned instinctively to the thought of Isaura. Whatever seemed to promise an early discharge of the commission connected with the discovery of Louise Duval seemed to bring Isaura nearer to him, or at least to excuse his yearning desire to see more of her—to understand her better. Faded into thin air was the vague jealousy of Gustave Rameau which he had so unreasonably conceived; he felt as if it were impossible that the man whom the "Ondine of Paris" claimed as her lover could dare to woo or hope to win an Isaura. He even forgot the friendship with the eloquent denouncer of the marriage-bond, which a little while ago had seemed to him an unpardonable offence: he remembered only the lovely face, so innocent, yet so intelligent; only the sweet voice which had for the first time breathed music into his own soul; only the gentle hand whose touch had for the first time sent through his veins the thrill which distinguishes from all her sex the woman whom we love. He went forth elated and joyous, and took his way to Isaura's villa. As he went, the leaves

on the trees under which he passed seemed stirred by the soft May breeze in sympathy with his own delight. Perhaps it was rather the reverse: his own silent delight sympathised with all delight in awakening nature. The lover seeking reconciliation with the loved one from whom some trifle has unreasonably estranged him, in a cloudless day of May,—if he be not happy enough to feel a brotherhood in all things happy—a leaf in bloom, a bird in song—then indeed he may call himself lover, but he does not know what is love.

BOOK IV.

BOOK IV.

HAPTER I.

FROM IGNORA CICOGNA TO MADAME DE GRANTMESNIL.

It is many days since I wrote to you, and but for your delightful note just received, reproaching me for silence, I should still be under the spell of that awe which certain words of M. Savarin were well fitted to produce. Chancing to ask him if he had written to you lately, he said, with that laugh of his, good-humouredly ironical, "No, Mademoiselle, I am not one of the *Facheux* whom Molière has immortalised. If the meeting of lovers should be sacred from the intrusion of a third person, however amiable, more sacred still should be the parting between an author and his work. Madame de Grantmesnil is in that moment so solemn to a genius earnest as hers—she is bidding farewell to a companion with whom, once dismissed into the world, she can never converse familiarly again; it ceases to be her companion when it becomes ours. Do not let us disturb the last hours they will pass together."

These words struck me much. I suppose there is truth in them. I can comprehend that a work which has long been all in all to its author, concentrating his thoughts, gathering round it the hopes and fears of his inmost heart, dies, as it were, to him when he has completed its life for others, and launched it into a world estranged from the solitude in which it was born and formed. I can almost conceive that, to a writer like you, the very fame which attends the work thus sent forth chills your own love for it. The characters you created in a fairyland, known but to yourself, must lose something of their mysterious charm when you hear them discussed and cavilled at, blamed or praised, as if they were really the creatures of streets and *salons*.

I wonder if hostile criticism pains or enrages you as it seems to do such other authors as I have known. M. Savarin, for instance, sets down in his tablets as an enemy to whom vengeance is due the smallest scribbler who wounds his self-love, and says frankly, "To me praise is food, dispraise is poison. Him who feeds me I pay; him who poisons me I break on the wheel." M. Savarin is, indeed, a skilful and energetic administrator to his own reputation. He deals with it as if it were a kingdom—establishes fortifications for its defence—enlists soldiers to fight for it. He is the soul and centre of a confederation in which each is bound to defend the territory of the others, and all those territories united constitute the imperial realm of M. Savarin. Don't think me an ungracious satirist in what I am thus saying of our brilliant friend. It is not I who here speak; it is himself. He avows his policy with the *naïveté* which makes the charm of his style as writer. "It is the greatest mistake," he said to me yesterday, "to talk of the Republic of Letters. Every author who wins a name is a sovereign in his own domain, be it large or small. Woe to any republican who wants to dethrone me!" Somehow or other, when M. Savarin thus talks I feel as if he were betraying the cause of genius. I cannot bring myself to regard literature as a craft—to me it is a sacred mission; and in hearing this "sovereign" boast of the tricks by which he maintains his state, I seem to listen to a priest who treats as imposture the religion he professes to teach. M. Savarin's favourite *elève* now is a young contributor to his journal, named Gustave Rameau. M. Savarin said the other day in my hearing, "I and my set were *Young France* —Gustave Rameau and his set are *New Paris*."

"And what is the distinction between the one and the other?" asked my American friend, Mrs. Morley.

"The set of 'Young France,'" answered M. Savarin, "had in it the hearty consciousness of youth: it was bold and vehement, with abundant vitality and animal spirits; whatever may be said against it in other respects, the power of thews and sinews must be conceded to its chief representatives. But the set of 'New Paris' has very bad health, and very indifferent spirits. Still, in its way, it is very clever; it can sting and bite as keenly as if it were big and strong. Rameau is the most promising member of the

set. He will be popular in his time, because he represents a good deal of the mind of his time—viz., the mind and the time of 'New Paris.'"

Do you know anything of this young Rameau's writings? You do not know himself, for he told me so, expressing a desire that was evidently very sincere, to find some occasion on which to render you his homage. He said this the first time I met him at M. Savarin's, and before he knew how dear to me are yourself and your fame. He came and sate by me after dinner, and won my interest at once by asking me if I had heard that you were busied on a new work; and then, without waiting for my answer, he launched forth into praises of you, which made a notable contrast to the scorn with which he spoke of all your contemporaries, except indeed M. Savarin, who, however, might not have been pleased to hear his favourite pupil style him "a great writer in small things." I spare you his epigrams on Dumas and Victor Hugo, and my beloved Lamartine. Though his talk was showy, and dazzled me at first, I soon got rather tired of it—even the first time we met. Since then I have seen him very often, not only at M. Savarin's, but he calls here at least every other day, and we have become quite good friends. He gains on acquaintance so far that one cannot help feeling how much he is to be pitied. He is so envious! and the envious must be so unhappy. And then he is at once so near and so far from all the things that he envies. He longs for riches and luxury, and can only as yet earn a bare competence by his labours. Therefore he hates the rich and luxurious. His literary successes, instead of pleasing him, render him miserable by their contrast with the fame of the authors whom he envies and assails. He has a beautiful head, of which he is conscious, but it is joined to a body without strength or grace. He is conscious of this too: but it is cruel to go on with this sketch. You can see at once the kind of person who, whether he inspire affection or dislike, cannot fail to create an interest—painful but compassionate.

You will be pleased to hear that Dr. C. considers my health so improved, that I may next year enter fairly on the profession for which I was intended and trained. Yet I still feel hesitating and doubtful. To give myself wholly up to the art in which I am told I could excel, must alienate

me entirely from the ambition that yearns for fields in which, alas! it may perhaps never appropriate to itself a rood for culture—only wander, lost in a vague fairyland, to which it has not the fairy's birthright. O thou great Enchantress, to whom are equally subject the streets of Paris and the realm of Faerie—thou who hast sounded to the deeps that circumfluent ocean called "practical human life," and hast taught the acutest of its navigators to consider how far its courses are guided by orbs in heaven—canst thou solve this riddle which, if it perplexes me, must perplex so many? What is the real distinction between the rare genius and the commonalty of human souls that feel to the quick all the grandest and divinest things which the rare genius places before them, sighing within themselves—"This rare genius does but express that which was previously familiar to us, so far as thought and sentiment extend"? Nay, the genius itself, however eloquent, never does, never can, express the whole of the thought or the sentiment it interprets: on the contrary, the greater the genius is, the more it leaves a something of incomplete satisfaction on our minds—it promises so much more than it performs—it implies so much more than it announces. I am impressed with the truth of what I thus say in proportion as I reperuse and restudy the greatest writers that have come within my narrow range of reading. And by the greatest writers I mean those who are not exclusively reasoners (of such I cannot judge), nor mere poets (of whom, so far as concerns the union of words with music, I ought to be able to judge), but the few who unite reason and poetry, and appeal at once to the common-sense of the multitude and the imagination of the few. The highest type of this union to me is Shakespeare; and I can comprehend the justice of no criticism on him which does not allow this sense of incomplete satisfaction augmenting in proportion as the poet soars to his highest. I ask again, In what consists this distinction between the rare genius and the commonalty of minds that exclaim, "He expresses what we feel, but never the whole of what we feel"? Is it the mere power over language, a larger knowledge of dictionaries, a finer ear for period and cadence, a more artistic craft in casing our thoughts and sentiments in well-selected words? Is it true what Buffon says, "that the style is the

man"? Is it true what I am told Goethe said, "Poetry is form"? I cannot believe this; and if you tell me it is true, then I no longer pine to be a writer. But if it be not true, explain to me how it is that the greatest genius is popular in proportion as it makes itself akin to us by uttering in better words than we employ that which was already within us, brings to light what in our souls was latent, and does but correct, beautify, and publish the correspondence which an ordinary reader carries on privately every day, between himself and his mind or his heart. If this superiority in the genius be but style and form, I abandon my dream of being something else than a singer of words by another to the music of another. But then, what then? My knowledge of books and art is wonderfully small. What little I do know I gather from very few books, and from what I hear said by the few worth listening to whom I happen to meet; and out of these, in solitude and reverie, not by conscious effort, I arrive at some results which appear to my inexperience original. Perhaps, indeed, they have the same kind of originality as the musical compositions of amateurs who effect a cantata or a quartette made up of borrowed details from great masters, and constituting a whole so original that no real master would deign to own it. Oh, if I could get you to understand how unsettled, how struggling my whole nature at this moment is! I wonder what is the sensation of the chrysalis which has been a silk-worm, when it first feels the new wings stirring within its shell—wings, alas! they are but those of the humblest and shortest-lived sort of moth, scarcely born into daylight before it dies. Could it reason, it might regret its earlier life, and say, "Better be the silk-worm than the moth."

From the Same to the Same.

Have you known well any English people in the course of your life? I say well, for you must have had acquaintance with many. But it seems to me so difficult to know an Englishman well. Even I, who so loved and revered Mr. Selby—I, whose childhood was admitted into his companionship by that love which places ignorance and knowledge, infancy and age, upon ground so equal that heart

touches heart—cannot say that I understand the English character to anything like the extent to which I fancy I understand the Italian and the French. Between us of the Continent and them of the island the British Channel always flows. There is an Englishman here to whom I have been introduced, whom I have met, though but seldom, in that society which bounds the Paris world to me. Pray, pray tell me, did you ever know, ever meet him? His name is Graham Vane. He is the only son, I am told, of a man who was a *célébrité* in England as an orator and statesman, and on both sides he belongs to the *haute aristocratie*. He himself has that indescribable air and mien to which we apply the epithet 'distinguished.' In the most crowded *salon* the eye would fix on him, and involuntarily follow his movements. Yet his manners are frank and simple, wholly without the stiffness or reserve which are said to characterise the English. There is an inborn dignity in his bearing which consists in the absence of all dignity assumed. But what strikes me most in this Englishman is an expression of countenance which the English depict by the word 'open'—that expression which inspires you with a belief in the existence of sincerity. Mrs. Morley said of him, in that poetic extravagance of phrase by which the Americans startle the English—"That man's forehead would light up the Mammoth Cave." Do you not know, Eulalie, what it is to us cultivators of art—art being the expression of truth through fiction—to come into the atmosphere of one of those souls in which Truth stands out bold and beautiful in itself, and needs no idealisation through fiction? Oh, how near we should be to heaven could we live daily, hourly, in the presence of one the honesty of whose word we could never doubt, the authority of whose word we could never disobey! Mr. Vane professes not to understand music—not even to care for it, except rarely—and yet he spoke of its influence over others with an enthusiasm that half charmed me once more back to my destined calling—nay, might have charmed me wholly, but that he seemed to think that I—that any public singer—must be a creature apart from the world—the world in which such men live. Perhaps that is true.

CHAPTER II.

It was one of those lovely noons towards the end of May in which a rural suburb has the mellow charm of summer to him who escapes awhile from the streets of a crowded capital. The Londoner knows its charms when he feels his tread on the softening swards of the Vale of Health, or, pausing at Richmond under the budding willow, gazes on the river glittering in the warmer sunlight, and hears from the villa-gardens behind him the brief trill of the blackbird. But the suburbs round Paris are, I think, a yet more pleasing relief from the metropolis; they are more easily reached, and I know not why, but they seem more rural, perhaps because the contrast of their repose with the stir left behind—of their redundance of leaf and blossom, compared with the prim efflorescence of trees in the Boulevards and Tuileries—is more striking. However that may be, when Graham reached the pretty suburb in which Isaura dwelt, it seemed to him as if all the wheels of the loud busy life were suddenly smitten still. The hour was yet early; he felt sure that he should find Isaura at home. The garden-gate stood unfastened and ajar; he pushed it aside and entered. I think I have before said that the garden of the villa was shut out from the road, and the gaze of neighbours, by a wall and thick belts of evergreens; it stretched behind the house somewhat far for the garden of a suburban villa. He paused when he had passed the gateway, for he heard in the distance the voice of one singing—singing low, singing plaintively. He knew it was the voice of Isaura; he passed on, leaving the house behind him, and tracking the voice till he reached the singer.

Isaura was seated within an arbour towards the further end of the garden—an arbour which, a little later in the year, must indeed be delicate and dainty with lush exuberance of jessamine and woodbine; now into its iron trellis-work leaflet and flowers were insinuating their gentle way. Just at the entrance one white rose—a winter rose that had

mysteriously survived its relations—opened its pale hues frankly to the noonday sun. Graham approached slowly, noiselessly, and the last note of the song had ceased when he stood at the entrance of the arbour. Isaura did not perceive him at first, for her face was bent downward musingly, as was often her wont after singing, especially when alone. But she felt that the place was darkened, that something stood between her and the sunshine. She raised her face, and a quick flush mantled over it as she uttered his name, not loudly, not as in surprise, but inwardly and whisperingly, as in a sort of fear.

"Pardon me, Mademoiselle," said Graham, entering; "but I heard your voice as I came into the garden, and it drew me onward involuntarily. What a lovely air! and what simple sweetness in such of the words as reached me! I am so ignorant of music that you must not laugh at me if I ask whose is the music and whose are the words? Probably both are so well known as to convict me of a barbarous ignorance."

"Oh no," said Isaura, with a still heightened colour, and in accents embarrassed and hesitating. "Both the words and music are by an unknown and very humble composer, yet not, indeed, quite original; they have not even that merit—at least they were suggested by a popular song in the Neapolitan dialect which is said to be very old."

"I don't know if I caught the true meaning of the words, for they seemed to me to convey a more subtle and refined sentiment than is common in the popular songs of southern Italy."

"The sentiment in the original is changed in the paraphrase, and not, I fear, improved by the change."

"Will you explain to me the sentiment in both, and let me judge which I prefer?"

"In the Neapolitan song a young fisherman, who has moored his boat under a rock on the shore, sees a beautiful face below the surface of the waters; he imagines it to be that of a Nereid, and casts in his net to catch this supposed nymph of the ocean. He only disturbs the water, loses the image, and brings up a few common fishes. He returns home disappointed, and very much enamoured of the supposed Nereid. The next day he goes again to the same place, and discovers that the face which had so charmed

him was that of a mortal girl reflected on the waters from the rock behind him, on which she had been seated, and on which she had her home. The original air is arch and lively; just listen to it." And Isaura warbled one of those artless and somewhat meagre tunes to which light-stringed instruments are the fitting accompaniment.

"That," said Graham, "is a different music indeed from the other, which is deep and plaintive, and goes to the heart."

"But do you not see how the words have been altered? In the song you first heard me singing, the fisherman goes again to the spot, again and again sees the face in the water, again and again seeks to capture the Nereid, and never knows to the last that the face was that of the mortal on the rock close behind him, and which he passed by without notice every day. Deluded by an ideal image, the real one escapes from his eye."

"Is the verse that is recast meant to symbolize a moral in love?"

"In love? nay, I know not; but in life, yes—at least the life of the artist."

"The paraphrase of the original is yours, Signorina—words and music both. Am I not right? Your silence answers, 'Yes.' Will you pardon me if I say that, though there can be no doubt of the new beauty you have given to the old song, I think that the moral of the old was the sounder one, the truer to human life. We do not go on to the last duped by an illusion. If enamoured by the shadow on the waters, still we do look around us and discover the image it reflects."

Isaura shook her head gently, but made no answer. On the table before her there were a few myrtle-sprigs and one or two buds from the last winter rose, which she had been arranging into a simple nosegay; she took up these, and abstractedly began to pluck and scatter the rose-leaves.

"Despise the coming May flowers if you will, they will soon be so plentiful," said Graham; "but do not cast away the few blossoms which winter has so kindly spared, and which even summer will not give again; and, placing his hand on the winter buds, it touched hers—lightly, indeed, but she felt the touch, shrank from it, coloured, and rose from her seat.

"The sun has left this side of the garden, the east wind is rising, and you must find it chilly here," she said, in an altered tone; "will you not come into the house?"

"It is not the air that I feel chilly," said Graham, with a half-smile; "I almost fear that my prosaic admonitions have displeased you."

"They were not prosaic; and they were kind and very wise," she added, with her exquisite laugh—laugh so wonderfully sweet and musical. She now had gained the entrance of the arbour; Graham joined her, and they walked towards the house. He asked her if she had seen much of the Savarins since they had met.

"Once or twice we have been there of an evening."

"And encountered, no doubt, the illustrious young minstrel who despises Tasso and Corneille?"

"M. Rameau? Oh, yes; he is constantly at the Savarins. Do not be severe on him. He is unhappy—he is struggling—he is soured. An artist has thorns in his path which lookers-on do not heed."

"All people have thorns in their path, and I have no great respect for those who want lookers-on to heed them whenever they are scratched. But M. Rameau seems to me one of those writers very common now-a-days, in France and even in England; writers who have never read anything worth studying, and are, of course, presumptuous in proportion to their ignorance. I should not have thought an artist like yourself could have recognised an artist in a M. Rameau who despises Tasso without knowing Italian."

Graham spoke bitterly; he was once more jealous.

"Are you not an artist yourself? Are you not a writer? M. Savarin told me you were a distinguished man of letters."

"M. Savarin flatters me too much. I am not an artist, and I have a great dislike to that word as it is now hackneyed and vulgarised in England and in France. A cook calls himself an artist; a tailor does the same; a man writes a gaudy melodrame, a spasmodic song, a sensational novel, and straightway he calls himself an artist, and indulges in a pedantic jargon about 'essence' and 'form,' assuring us that a poet we can understand wants essence, and a poet we can scan wants form. Thank heaven, I am not vain enough to call myself artist. I have written some very dry

lucubrations in periodicals, chiefly political, or critical upon other subjects than art. But why, *à propos* of M. Rameau, did you ask me that question respecting myself?"

"Because much in your conversation," answered Isaura, in rather a mournful tone, "made me suppose you had more sympathies with art and its cultivators than you cared to avow. And if you had such sympathies, you would comprehend what a relief it is to a poor aspirant to art like myself to come into communication with those who devote themselves to any art distinct from the common pursuits of the world; what a relief it is to escape from the ordinary talk of society. There is a sort of instinctive freemasonry among us, including masters and disciples, and one art has a fellowship with other arts, mine is but song and music, yet I feel attracted towards a sculptor, a painter, a romance-writer, a poet, as much as towards a singer, a musician. Do you understand why I cannot contemn M. Rameau as you do? I differ from his tastes in literature; I do not much admire such of his writings as I have read; I grant that he overestimates his own genius, whatever that be,—yet I like to converse with him: he is a struggler upward, though with weak wings, or with erring footsteps, like myself."

"Mademoiselle," said Graham, earnestly, "I cannot say how I thank you for this candour. Do not condemn me for abusing it—if ——" he paused

"If what?"

"If I, so much older than yourself—I do not say only in years, but in the experience of life—I whose lot is cast among those busy and 'positive' pursuits, which neces sarily quicken that unromantic faculty called common-sense —if, I say, the deep interest with which you must inspire all whom you admit into an acquaintance, even as unfamiliar as that now between us, makes me utter one caution, such as might be uttered by a friend or brother. Beware of those artistic sympathies which you so touchingly confess; beware how, in the great events of life, you allow fancy to misguide your reason. In choosing friends on whom to rely, separate the artist from the human being. Judge of the human being for what it is in itself. Do not worship the face on the waters, blind to the image on the rock. In one word, never see in an artist like a

M. Rameau the human being to whom you could intrust the destinies of your life. Pardon me, pardon me; we may meet little hereafter, but you are a creature so utterly new to me, so wholly unlike any woman I have ever before encountered and admired, and to me seem endowed with such wealth of mind and soul, exposed to such hazard, that —that——" again he paused, and his voice trembled as he concluded—"that it would be a deep sorrow to me if, perhaps years hence, I should have to say, 'Alas! by what mistake has that wealth been wasted!'"

While they had thus conversed, mechanically they had turned away from the house, and were again standing before the arbour.

Graham, absorbed in the passion of his adjuration, had not till now looked into the face of the companion by his side. Now, when he had concluded, and heard no reply, he bent down and saw that Isaura was weeping silently.

His heart smote him.

"Forgive me," he exclaimed, drawing her hand into his; "I have had no right to talk thus; but it was not from want of respect; it was—it was——"

The hand which was yielded to his pressed it gently, timidly, chastely.

"Forgive!" murmured Isaura; "do you think that I, an orphan, have never longed for a friend who would speak to me thus?" And so saying, she lifted her eyes, streaming still, to his bended countenance—eyes, despite their tears, so clear in their innocent limpid beauty, so ingenuous, so frank, so virgin-like, so unlike the eyes of 'any other woman he had encountered and admired.'

"Alas!" he said, in quick and hurried accents, "you may remember, when we have before conversed, how I, though so uncultured in your art, still recognised its beautiful influence upon human breasts; how I sought to combat your own depreciation of its rank among the elevating agencies of humanity; how, too, I said that no man could venture to ask you to renounce the boards, the lamps—resign the fame of actress, of singer. Well, now that you accord to me the title of friend, now that you so touchingly remind me that you are an orphan—thinking of all the perils the young and the beautiful of your sex must encounter when they abandon private life for public—I

think that a true friend might put the question, 'Can you resign the fame of actress, of singer?'"

"I will answer you frankly. The profession which once seemed to me so alluring began to lose its charms in my eyes some months ago. It was your words, very eloquently expressed, on the ennobling effects of music and song upon a popular audience, that counteracted the growing distaste to rendering up my whole life to the vocation of the stage. But now I think I should feel grateful to the friend whose advice interpreted the voice of my own heart, and bade me relinquish the career of actress."

Graham's face grew radiant. But whatever might have been his reply was arrested; voices and footsteps were heard behind. He turned round and saw the Venosta, the Savarins, and Gustave Rameau.

Isaura heard and saw also, started in a sort of alarmed confusion, and then instinctively retreated towards the arbour.

Graham hurried on to meet the Signora and the visitors, giving time to Isaura to compose herself by arresting them in the pathway with conventional salutations.

A few minutes later Isaura joined them, and there was talk to which Graham scarcely listened, though he shared in it by abstracted monosyllables. He declined going into the house, and took leave at the gate. In parting, his eyes fixed themselves on Isaura. Gustave Rameau was by her side. That nosegay which had been left in the arbour was in her hand; and though she was bending over it, she did not now pluck and scatter the rose-leaves. Graham at that moment felt no jealousy of the fair-faced young poet beside her.

As he walked slowly back, he muttered to himself, "But am I yet in the position to hold myself wholly free? Am I, am I? Were the sole choice before me that between her and ambition and wealth, how soon it would be made! Ambition has no prize equal to the heart of such a woman; wealth no sources of joy equal to the treasures of her love."

CHAPTER III.

FROM ISAURA CICOGNA TO MADAME DE GRANTMESNIL.

THE day after I posted my last, Mr. Vane called on us. I was in our little garden at the time. Our conversation was brief, and soon interrupted by visitors—the Savarins and M. Rameau. I long for your answer. I wonder how he impressed you, if you have met him; how he would impress, if you met him now. To me he is so different from all others; and I scarcely know why his words ring in my ears, and his image rests in my thoughts. It is strange altogether; for though he is young, he speaks to me as if he were so much older than I—so kindly, so tenderly, yet as if I were a child, and much as the dear *Maestro* might do, if he thought I needed caution or counsel. Do not fancy, Eulalie, that there is any danger of my deceiving myself as to the nature of such interest as he may take in me. Oh no! There is a gulf between us there which he does not lose sight of, and which we could not pass. How, indeed, I could interest him at all, I cannot guess. A rich, high-born Englishman, intent on political life; practical, prosaic—no, not prosaic; but still with the kind of sense which does not admit into its range of vision that world of dreams which is familiar as their daily home to Romance and to Art. It has always seemed to me that for love, love such as I conceive it, there must be a deep and constant sympathy between two persons—not, indeed, in the usual and ordinary trifles of taste and sentiment, but in those essentials which form the root of character, and branch out in all the leaves and blooms that expand to the sunshine and shrink from the cold,—that the worldling should wed the worldling, the artist the artist. Can the realist and the idealist blend together, and hold together till death and beyond death? If not, can there be true love between them? By true love, I mean the love which

interpenetrates the soul, and once given can never die Oh, Eulalie—answer me—answer!

P.S.—I have now fully made up my mind to renounce all thought of the stage.

From Madame de Grantmesnil to Isaura Cicogna.

My dear Child,—How your mind has grown since you left me, the sanguine and aspiring votary of an art which, of all arts, brings the most immediate reward to a successful cultivator, and is in itself so divine in its immediate effects upon human souls! Who shall say what may be the after-results of those effects which the waiters on posterity presume to despise because they *are* immediate? A dull man, to whose mind a ray of that vague star-light undetected in the atmosphere of workday life has never yet travelled; to whom the philosopher, the preacher, the poet appeal in vain—nay, to whom the conceptions of the grandest master of instrumental music are incomprehensible; to whom Beethoven unlocks no portal in heaven; to whom Rossini has no mysteries on earth unsolved by the critics of the pit,—suddenly hears the human voice of the human singer, and at the sound of that voice the walls which enclosed him fall. The something far from and beyond the routine of his commonplace existence becomes known to him. He of himself, poor man, can make nothing of it. He cannot put it down on paper, and say the next morning, "I am an inch nearer to heaven than I was last night;" but the feeling that he *is* an inch nearer to heaven abides with him. Unconsciously he is gentler, he is less earthly, and, in being nearer to heaven, he is stronger for earth. You singers do not seem to me to understand that you have—to use your own word, so much in vogue that it has become abused and trite—*a mission!* When you talk of missions, from whom comes the mission? Not from men. If there be a mission from man to men, it must be appointed from on high.

Think of all this; and in being faithful to your art, be true to yourself. If you feel divided between that art and the heart of the writer, and acknowledge the first to be too exacting to admit a rival, keep to that in which you are sure to excel. Alas, my fair child! do not imagine that

we writers feel a happiness in our pursuits and aims more complete than that which you can command. If we care for fame (and, to be frank, we all do), that fame does not come up before us face to face—a real, visible, palpable form, as it does to the singer, to the actress. I grant that it may be more enduring, but an endurance on the length of which we dare not reckon. A writer cannot be sure of immortality till his language itself be dead; and then he has but a share in an uncertain lottery. Nothing but fragments remains of the Phrynichus, who rivalled Æschylus; of the Agathon, who perhaps excelled Euripides; of the Alcæus, in whom Horace acknowledged a master and a model; their renown is not in their works, it is but in their names. And, after all, the names of singers and actors last perhaps as long. Greece retains the name of Polus, Rome of Roscius, England of Garrick, France of Talma, Italy of Pasta, more lastingly than posterity is likely to retain mine. You address to me a question, which I have often put to myself—"What is the distinction between the writer and the reader, when the reader says, 'These are *my* thoughts, these are *my* feelings; the writer has stolen them, and clothed them in his own words'?" And the more the reader says this, the more wide is the audience, the more genuine the renown, and, paradox though it seems, the more consummate the originality, of the writer. But no, it is not the mere gift of expression, it is not the mere craft of the pen, it is not the mere taste in arrangement of word and cadence, which thus enables the one to interpret the mind, the heart, the soul of the many. It is a power breathed into him as he lay in his cradle, and a power that gathered around itself, as he grew up, all the influences he acquired, whether from observation of external nature, or from study of men and books, or from that experience of daily life which varies with every human being. No education could make two intellects exactly alike, as no culture can make two leaves exactly alike. How truly you describe the sense of dissatisfaction which every writer of superior genius communicates to his admirers! how truly do you feel that the greater is the dissatisfaction in proportion to the writer's genius, and the admirer's conception of it! But that is the mystery which makes—let me borrow a German phrase—the *cloud-*

land between the finite and the infinite. The greatest philosopher, intent on the secrets of Nature, feels that dissatisfaction in Nature herself. The finite cannot reduce into logic and criticism the infinite.

Let us dismiss these matters, which perplex the reason, and approach that which touches the heart—which in your case, my child, touches the heart of woman. You speak of love, and deem that the love which lasts—the household, the conjugal love—should be based upon such sympathies of pursuit that the artist should wed with the artist.

This is one of the questions you do well to address to me; for whether from my own experience, or from that which I have gained from observation extended over a wide range of life, and quickened and intensified by the class of writing that I cultivate, and which necessitates a calm study of the passions, I am an authority on such subjects, better than most women can be. And alas, my child! I come to this result: there is no prescribing to men or to women whom to select, whom to refuse. I cannot refute the axiom of the ancient poet, "In love there is no wherefore." But there is a time—it is often but a moment of time—in which love is not yet a master, in which we can say, "I *will* love—I will *not* love."

Now, if I could find you in such a moment, I would say to you, "Artist, do not love—do not marry—an artist." Two artistic natures rarely combine. The artistic nature is wonderfully exacting. I fear it is supremely egotistical—so jealously sensitive that it writhes at the touch of a rival. Racine was the happiest of husbands; his wife adored his genius, but could not understand his plays. Would Racine have been happy if he had married a Corneille in petticoats? I who speak have loved an artist, certainly equal to myself. I am sure that he loved me. That sympathy in pursuits of which you speak drew us together, and became very soon the cause of antipathy. To both of us the endeavour to coalesce was misery.

I don't know your M. Rameau. Savarin has sent me some of his writings; from these I judge that his only chance of happiness would be to marry a commonplace woman, with *séparation de biens*. He is, believe me, but one of the many with whom New Paris abounds, who,

because they have the infirmities of genius, imagine they have its strength.

I come next to the Englishman. I see how serious is your questioning about him. You not only regard him as a being distinct from the crowd of a *salon;* he stands equally apart in the chamber of your thoughts—you do not mention him in the same letter as that which treats of Rameau and Savarin. He has become already an image not to be lightly mixed up with others. You would rather not have mentioned him at all to me, but you could not resist it. The interest you feel in him so perplexed you, that in a kind of feverish impatience you cry out to me, "Can you solve the riddle? Did you ever know well Englishmen? Can an Englishman be understood out of his island?" &c. &c. Yes, I have known well many Englishmen. In affairs of the heart they are much like all other men. No; I do not know this Englishman in particular, nor any one of his name.

Well, my child, let us frankly grant that this foreigner has gained some hold on your thoughts, on your fancy, perhaps also on your heart. Do not fear that he will love you less enduringly, or that you will become alienated from him, because he is not an artist. If he be a strong nature, and with some great purpose in life, your ambition will fuse itself in his; and knowing you as I do, I believe you would make an excellent wife to an Englishman whom you honoured as well as loved; and sorry though I should be that you relinquished the singer's fame, I should be consoled in thinking you safe in the woman's best sphere—a contented home, safe from calumny, safe from gossip. I never had that home; and there has been no part in my author's life in which I would not have given all the celebrity it won for the obscure commonplace of such woman lot. Could I move human beings as pawns on a chess-board, I should indeed say that the most suitable and congenial mate for you, for a woman of sentiment and genius, would be a well-born and well-educated German; for such a German unites, with domestic habits and a strong sense of family ties, a romance of sentiment, a love of art, a predisposition towards the poetic side of life which is very rare among Englishmen of the same class. But as the German is not forthcoming, I give my vote for

the Englishman, provided only you love him. Ah, child, be sure of that. Do not mistake fancy for love. All women do not require love in marriage, but without it that which is best and highest in *you* would wither and die. Write to me often and tell me all. M. Savarin is right. My book is no longer my companion. It is gone from me, and I am once more alone in the world.—Yours affectionately.

P.S.—Is not your postscript a woman's? Does it not require a woman's postscript in reply? You say in yours that you have fully made up your mind to renounce all thoughts of the stage. I ask in mine, "What has the Englishman to do with that determination?"

CHAPTER IV.

Some weeks have passed since Graham's talk with Isaura in the garden; he has not visited the villa since. His cousins the D'Altons have passed through Paris on their way to Italy, meaning to stay a few days; they stayed nearly a month, and monopolised much of Graham's companionship. Both these were reasons why, in the habitual society of the Duke, Graham's persuasion that he was not yet free to court the hand of Isaura became strengthened, and with that persuasion necessarily came a question equally addressed to his conscience. "If not yet free to court her hand, am I free to expose myself to the temptation of seeking to win her affection?" But when his cousin was gone, his heart began to assert its own rights, to argue its own case, and suggest modes of reconciling its dictates to the obligations which seemed to oppose them. In this hesitating state of mind he received the following note:—

Villa * * *, Lac d'Enghien.

My dear Mr. Vane,—We have retreated from Paris to the banks of this beautiful little lake. Come and help to save Frank and myself from quarrelling with each other, which, until the Rights of Women are firmly established, married folks always will do when left to themselves, especially if they are still lovers, as Frank and I are. Love is a terribly quarrelsome thing. Make us a present of a few days out of your wealth of time. We will visit Montmorency and the haunts of Rousseau—sail on the lake at moonlight—dine at gipsy *restaurants* under trees not yet embrowned by summer heats—discuss literature and politics—'Shakespeare and the musical glasses'—and be as sociable and pleasant as Boccaccio's tale-tellers at Fiesole. We shall be but a small party, only the Savarins, that unconscious sage and humorist Signora Venosta, and that dimple-cheeked Isaura, who embodies the song of

nightingales and the smile of summer. Refuse, and Frank shall not have an easy moment till he sends in his claims for 30 millions against the Alabama. — Yours, as you behave,

LIZZIE MORLEY.

Graham did not refuse. He went to Enghein for four days and a quarter. He was under the same roof as Isaura. O those happy days!—so happy that they defy description. But though to Graham the happiest days he had ever known, they were happier still to Isaura. There were drawbacks to his happiness, none to hers,—drawbacks partly from reasons the weight of which the reader will estimate later; partly from reasons the reader may at once comprehend and assess. In the sunshine of her joy, all the vivid colourings of Isaura's artistic temperament came forth, so that what I may call the homely, domestic woman-side of her nature faded into shadow. If, my dear reader, whether you be man or woman, you have come into familiar contact with some creature of a genius to which, even assuming that you yourself have a genius in its own way, you have no special affinities,—have you not felt shy with that creature? Have you not, perhaps, felt how intensely you could love that creature, and doubted if that creature could possibly love you? Now I think that shyness and that disbelief are common with either man or woman, if, however conscious of superiority in the prose of life, he or she recognises inferiority in the poetry of it. And yet this self-abasement is exceedingly mistaken. The poetical kind of genius is so grandly indulgent, so inherently deferential, bows with such unaffected modesty to the superiority in which it fears it may fail (yet seldom does fail)—the superiority of common sense. And when we come to women, what marvellous truth is conveyed by the woman who has had no superior in intellectual gifts among her own sex! Corinne, crowned at the Capitol, selects out of the whole world, as the hero of her love, no rival poet and enthusiast, but a cold-blooded, sensible Englishman.

Graham Vane, in his strong masculine form of intellect —Graham Vane, from whom I hope much, if he live to fulfil his rightful career—had, not unreasonably, the desire

to dominate the life of the woman whom he selected as the partner of his own. But the life of Isaura seemed to escape him. If at moments, listening to her, he would say to himself, "What a companion!—life could never be dull with her"—at other moments he would say, "True, never dull, but would it be always safe?" And then comes in that mysterious power of love which crushes all beneath its feet, and makes us end self-commune by that abject submission of reason, which only murmurs, "Better be unhappy with the one you love, than happy with one whom you do not." All such self-communes were unknown to Isaura. She lived in the bliss of the hour. If Graham could have read her heart, he would have dismissed all doubt whether he could dominate her life. Could a Fate or an angel have said to her, "Choose,—on one side I promise you the glories of a Catalani, a Pasta, a Sappho, a De Staël, a Georges Sand—all combined into one immortal name: or, on the other side, the whole heart of the man who would estrange himself from you if you had such combination of glories"—her answer would have brought Graham Vane to her feet: all scruples, all doubts would have vanished; he would have exclaimed, with the generosity inherent in the higher order of man, "Be glorious, if your nature wills it so. Glory enough to me that you would have resigned glory itself to become mine." But how is it that men worth a woman's loving become so diffident when they love intensely? Even in ordinary cases of love there is so ineffable a delicacy in virgin woman, that a man, be he how refined soever, feels himself rough and rude and coarse in comparison. And while that sort of delicacy was pre-eminent in this Italian orphan, there came, to increase the humility of the man so proud and so confident in himself when he had only men to deal with, the consciousness that his intellectual nature was hard and positive beside the angel-like purity and the fairy-like play of hers.

There was a strong wish on the part of Mrs. Morley to bring about the union of these two. She had a great regard and a great admiration for both. To her mind, unconscious of all Graham's doubts and prejudices, they were exactly suited to each other. A man of intellect so cultivated as Graham's, if married to a commonplace English 'Miss,'

would surely feel as if life had no sunshine and no flowers. The love of an Isaura would steep it in sunshine, pave it with flowers. Mrs. Morley admitted—all American Republicans of gentle birth do admit—the instincts which lead 'like' to match with 'like,' an equality of blood and race. With all her assertion of the Rights of Woman, I do not think that Mrs. Morley would ever have conceived the possibility of consenting that the richest, and prettiest, and cleverest girl in the States could become the wife of a son of hers if the girl had the taint of negro blood, even though shown nowhere save the slight distinguishing hue of her finger-nails. So, had Isaura's merits been threefold what they were, and she had been the wealthy heiress of a retail grocer, this fair Republican would have opposed (more strongly than many an English duchess, or at least a Scotch duke, would do, the wish of a son), the thought of an alliance between Graham Vane and the grocer's daughter! But Isaura was a Cicogna—an offspring of a very ancient and very noble house. Disparities of fortune, or mere worldly position, Mrs. Morley supremely despised. Here were the great parities of alliance—parities in years and good looks and mental culture. So, in short, she, in the invitation given to them, had planned for the union between Isaura and Graham.

To this plan she had an antagonist, whom she did not even guess, in Madame Savarin. That lady, as much attached to Isaura as was Mrs. Morley herself, and still more desirous of seeing a girl, brilliant and parentless, transferred from the companionship of Signora Venosta to the protection of a husband, entertained no belief in the serious attentions of Graham Vane. Perhaps she exaggerated his worldly advantages—perhaps she undervalued the warmth of his affections; but it was not within the range of her experience, confined much to Parisian life, nor in harmony with her notions of the frigidity and *morgue* of the English national character, that a rich and high-born young man, to whom a great career in practical public life was predicted, should form a matrimonial alliance with a foreign orphan girl who, if of gentle birth, had no useful connections, would bring no correspondent *dot*, and had been reared and intended for the profession of the stage. She much more feared that the result of any attentions on the part of such

a man would be rather calculated to compromise the orphan's name, or at least to mislead her expectations, than to secure her the shelter of a wedded home. Moreover, she had cherished plans of her own for Isaura's future. Madame Savarin had conceived for Gustave Rameau a friendly regard, stronger than that which Mrs. Morley entertained for Graham Vane, for it was more motherly. Gustave had been familiarised to her sight and her thoughts since he had first been launched into the literary world under her husband's auspices; he had confided to her his mortification in his failures, his joy in his successes. His beautiful countenance, his delicate health, his very infirmities and defects, had endeared him to her womanly heart. Isaura was the wife of all others who, in Madame Savarin's opinion, was made for Rameau. Her fortune, so trivial beside the wealth of the Englishman, would be a competence to Rameau; then that competence might swell into vast riches if Isaura succeeded on the stage. She found with extreme displeasure that Isaura's mind had become estranged from the profession to which she had been destined, and divined that a deference to the Englishman's prejudices had something to do with that estrangement. It was not to be expected that a Frenchwoman, wife to a sprightly man of letters, who had intimate friends and allies in every department of the artistic world, should cherish any prejudice whatever against the exercise of an art in which success achieved riches and renown. But she was prejudiced, as most Frenchwomen are, against allowing to unmarried girls the same freedom and independence of action that are the rights of women—French women—when married. And she would have disapproved the entrance of Isaura on her professional career until she could enter it as a wife—the wife of an artist—the wife of Gustave Rameau.

Unaware of the rivalry between these friendly diplomatists and schemers, Graham and Isaura glided hourly more and more down the current, which as yet ran smooth. No words by which love is spoken were exchanged between them; in fact, though constantly together, they were very rarely, and then but for moments, alone with each other. Mrs. Morley artfully schemed more than once to give them such opportunities for that mutual explanation of heart which,

she saw, had not yet taken place; with art more practised and more watchful, Madame Savarin contrived to baffle her hostess's intention. But, indeed, neither Graham nor Isaura sought to make opportunities for themselves. He, as we know, did not deem himself wholly justified in uttering the words of love by which a man of honour binds himself for life; and she!—what girl, pure-hearted and loving truly, does not shrink from seeking the opportunities which it is for the man to court? Yet Isaura needed no words to tell her that she was loved—no, nor even a pressure of the hand, a glance of the eye; she felt it instinctively, mysteriously, by the glow of her own being in the presence of her lover. She knew that she herself could not so love unless she were beloved.

Here woman's wit is keener and truthfuller than man's. Graham, as I have said, did not feel confident that he had reached the heart of Isaura: he was conscious that he had engaged her interest, that he had attracted her fancy; but often, when charmed by the joyous play of her imagination, he would sigh to himself, "To natures so gifted what single mortal can be the all in all."

They spent the summer mornings in excursions round the beautiful neighbourhood, dined early, and sailed on the calm lake at moonlight. Their talk was such as might be expected from lovers of books in summer holidays. Savarin was a critic by profession; Graham Vane, if not that, at least owed such literary reputation as he had yet gained to essays in which the rare critical faculty was conspicuously developed.

It was pleasant to hear the clash of these two minds encountering each other; they differed perhaps less in opinions than in the mode by which opinions are discussed. The Englishman's range of reading was wider than the Frenchman's, and his scholarship more accurate; but the Frenchman had a compact neatness of expression, a light and nimble grace, whether in the advancing or the retreat of his argument, which covered deficiencies, and often made them appear like merits. Graham was compelled, indeed, to relinquish many of the forces of superior knowledge or graver eloquence, which, with less lively antagonists, he could have brought into the field, for the witty sarcasm of Savarin would have turned them aside as pedantry or de-

clamation. But though Graham was neither dry nor diffuse, and the happiness at his heart brought out the gaiety of humour which had been his early characteristic, and yet rendered his familiar intercourse genial and playful,—still there was this distinction between his humour and Savarin's wit, that in the first there was always something earnest, in the last always something mocking. And in criticism Graham seemed ever anxious to bring out a latent beauty, even in writers comparatively neglected. Savarin was acutest when dragging forth a blemish never before discovered in writers universally read.

Graham did not perhaps notice the profound attention with which Isaura listened to him in these intellectual skirmishes with the more glittering Parisian. There was this distinction she made between him and Savarin: when the last spoke she often chimed in with some happy sentiment of her own; but she never interrupted Graham—never intimated a dissent from his theories of art, or the deductions he drew from them; and she would remain silent and thoughtful for some minutes when his voice ceased. There was passing from his mind into hers an ambition which she imagined, poor girl, that he would be pleased to think he had inspired, and which might become a new bond of sympathy between them. But as yet the ambition was vague and timid—an idea or a dream to be fulfilled in some indefinite future.

The last night of this short-lived holiday-time, the party, after staying out on the lake to a later hour than usual, stood lingering still on the lawn of the villa; and their host, who was rather addicted to superficial studies of the positive sciences, including, of course, the most popular of all, astronomy, kept his guests politely listening to speculative conjectures on the probable size of the inhabitants of Sirius—that very distant and very gigantic inhabitant of heaven who has led philosophers into mortifying reflections upon the utter insignificance of our own poor little planet, capable of producing nothing greater than Shakespeares and Newtons, Aristotles and Cæsars—manikins, no doubt, beside intellects proportioned to the size of the world in which they flourish.

As it chanced, Isaura and Graham were then standing close to each other and a little apart from the rest. "It is

very strange," said Graham, laughing low, "how little I care about Sirius. He is the sun of some other system, and is perhaps not habitable at all, except by Salamanders. He cannot be one of the stars with which I have established familiar acquaintance, associated with fancies and dreams and hopes, as most of us do, for instance, with Hesperus, the moon's harbinger and comrade. But amid all those stars there is one—not Hesperus—which has always had, from my childhood, a mysterious fascination for me. Knowing as little of astrology as I do of astronomy, when I gaze upon that star I become credulously superstitious, and fancy it has an influence on my life. Have you, too, any favourite star?"

"Yes," said Isaura; "and I distinguish it now, but I do not even know its name, and never would ask it."

"So like me. I would not vulgarise my unknown source of beautiful illusions by giving it the name it takes in technical catalogues. For fear of learning that name I never have pointed it out to any one before. I too at this moment distinguish it apart from all its brotherhood. Tell me which is yours."

Isaura pointed and explained. The Englishman was startled. By what strange coincidence could they both have singled out from all the host of heaven the same favourite star?

"*Cher* Vane," cried Savarin, "Colonel Morley declares that what America is to the terrestrial system Sirius is to the heavenly. America is to extinguish Europe, and then Sirius is to extinguish the world."

"Not for some millions of years; time to look about us," said the Colonel, gravely. "But I certainly differ from those who maintain that Sirius recedes from us. I say that he approaches. The principles of a body so enlightened must be those of progress." Then addressing Graham in English, he added, "there will be a mulling in this fogified planet some day, I predicate. Sirius is a *keener!*"

"I have not imagination lively enough to interest myself in the destinies of Sirius in connection with our planet at a date so remote," said Graham, smiling. Then he added in a whisper to Isaura, "My imagination does not carry me farther than to wonder whether this day twelvemonth—

the 8th of July—we two shall both be singling out that same star, and gazing on it as now, side by side."

This was the sole utterance of that sentiment in which the romance of love is so rich that the Englishman addressed to Isaura during those memorable summer days at Enghien.

CHAPTER V.

THE next morning the party broke up. Letters had been delivered both to Savarin and to Graham, which, even had the day for departure not been fixed, would have summoned them away. On reading his letter, Savarin's brow became clouded. He made a sign to his wife after breakfast, and wandered away with her down an alley in the little garden. His trouble was of that nature which a wife either soothes or aggravates, according sometimes to her habitual frame of mind, sometimes to the mood of temper in which she may chance to be;—a household trouble, a pecuniary trouble.

Savarin was by no means an extravagant man. His mode of living, though elegant and hospitable, was modest compared to that of many French authors inferior to himself in the fame which at Paris brings a very good return in francs. But his station itself as the head of a powerful literary clique necessitated many expenses which were too congenial to his extreme good-nature to be regulated by strict prudence. His hand was always open to distressed writers and struggling artists, and his sole income was derived from his pen and a journal in which he was chief editor and formerly sole proprietor. But that journal had of late not prospered. He had sold or pledged a considerable share in the proprietorship. He had been compelled also to borrow a sum large for him, and the debt obtained from a retired *bourgeois* who lent out his moneys "by way," he said, "of maintaining an excitement and interest in life," would in a few days become due. The letter was not from that creditor, but it was from his publisher, containing a very disagreeable statement of accounts, pressing for settlement, and declining an offer of Savarin's for a new book (not yet begun) except upon terms that the author valued himself too highly to accept. Altogether, the situation was unpleasant. There were many times in which Madame Savarin presumed to scold her distinguished husband for his want of prudence and thrift. But those

were never the times when scolding could be of no use. It could clearly be of no use now. Now was the moment to cheer and encourage him, to reassure him as to his own undiminished powers and popularity, for he talked dejectedly of himself as obsolete and passing out of fashion; to convince him also of the impossibility that the ungrateful publisher whom Savarin's more brilliant successes had enriched could encounter the odium of hostile proceedings; and to remind him of all the authors, all the artists, whom he, in their earlier difficulties, had so liberally assisted, and from whom a sum sufficing to pay off the *bourgeois* creditor when the day arrived could now be honourably asked and would be readily contributed. In this last suggestion the homely prudent good sense of Madame Savarin failed her. She did not comprehend that delicate pride of honour which, with all his Parisian frivolities and cynicism, dignified the Parisian man of genius. Savarin could not, to save his neck from a rope, have sent round the begging-hat to friends whom he had obliged. Madame Savarin was one of those women with large-lobed ears, who can be wonderfully affectionate, wonderfully sensible; admirable wives and mothers, and yet are deficient in artistic sympathies with artistic natures. Still, a really good honest wife is such an incalculable blessing to her lord, that, at the end of the talk in the solitary *allée*, this man of exquisite *finesse*, of the undefinably high-bred temperament, and, alas! the painfully morbid susceptibility, which belong to the genuine artistic character, emerged into the open sunlit lawn with his crest uplifted, his lip curved upward in its joyous mockery, and perfectly persuaded that somehow or other he should put down the offensive publisher, and pay off the unoffending creditor when the day for payment came. Still he had judgment enough to know that to do this he must get back to Paris, and could not dawdle away precious hours in discussing the principles of poetry with Graham Vane.

There was only one thing, apart from "the begging-hat," in which Savarin dissented from his wife. She suggested his starting a new journal in conjunction with Gustave Rameau, upon whose genius and the expectations to be formed from it (here she was tacitly thinking of Isaura wedded to Rameau, and more than a Malibran on the

stage) she insisted vehemently. Savarin did not thus estimate Gustave Rameau—thought him a clever promising young writer in a very bad school of writing, who might do well some day or other. But that a Rameau could help a Savarin to make a fortune! No; at that idea he opened his eyes, patted his wife's shoulder, and called her "*enfant.*"

Graham's letter was from M. Renard, and ran thus:—

MONSIEUR,—I had the honour to call at your apartment this morning, and I write this line to the address given to me by your *concierge* to say that I have been fortunate enough to ascertain that the relation of the missing lady is now at Paris. I shall hold myself in readiness to attend your summons.—Deign to accept, Monsieur, the assurance of my profound consideration. J. RENARD.

This communication sufficed to put Graham into very high spirits. Anything that promised success to his research seemed to deliver his thoughts from a burthen and his will from a fetter. Perhaps in a few days he might frankly and honourably say to Isaura words which would justify his retaining longer, and pressing more ardently, the delicate hand which trembled in his as they took leave.

On arriving at Paris, Graham despatched a note to M. Renard requesting to see him, and received a brief line in reply that M. Renard feared he should be detained on other and important business till the evening, but hoped to call at eight o'clock. A few minutes before that hour he entered Graham's apartment.

"You have discovered the uncle of Louise Duval!" exclaimed Graham; "of course you mean M. de Mauléon, and he is at Paris?"

"True so far, Monsieur; but do not be too sanguine as to the results of the information I can give you. Permit me, as briefly as possible, to state the circumstances. When you acquainted me with the fact that M. de Mauléon was the uncle of Louise Duval, I told you that I was not without hopes of finding him out, though so long absent from Paris. I will now explain why. Some months ago, one of my colleagues engaged in the political department (which I am not) was sent to Lyons, in consequence of some suspicions conceived by the loyal authorities there of a plot

against the Emperor's life. The suspicions were groundless, the plot a mare's nest. But my colleague's attention was especially drawn towards a man, not mixed up with the circumstances from which a plot had been inferred, but deemed in some way or other a dangerous enemy to the Government. Ostensibly, he exercised a modest and small calling as a sort of *courtier* or *agent d'affaires;* but it was noticed that certain persons familiarly frequenting his apartment, or to whose houses he used to go at night, were disaffected to the Government—not by any means of the lowest rank—some of them rich malcontents who had been devoted Orleanists; others, disappointed aspirants to office or the "cross;" one or two well-born and opulent fanatics dreaming of another Republic. Certain very able articles in the journals of the excitable *Midi*, though bearing another signature, were composed or dictated by this man —articles evading the censure and penalties of the law, but very mischievous in their tone. All who had come into familiar communication with this person were impressed with a sense of his powers; and also with a vague belief that he belonged to a higher class in breeding and education than that of a petty *agent d'affaires*. My colleague set himself to watch the man, and took occasions of business at his little office to enter into talk with him. Not by personal appearance, but by voice, he came to a conclusion that the man was not wholly a stranger to him; a peculiar voice with a slight Norman breath of pronunciation, though a Parisian accent, a voice very low, yet very distinct—very masculine, yet very gentle. My colleague was puzzled, till late one evening he observed the man coming out of the house of one of these rich malcontents, the rich malcontent himself accompanying him. My colleague, availing himself of the dimness of light, as the two passed into a lane which led to the agent's apartment, contrived to keep close behind and listen to their conversation. But of this he heard nothing—only, when at the end of the lane, the rich man turned abruptly, shook his companion warmly by the hand, and parted from him, saying, 'Never fear; all shall go right with you, my dear Victor.' At the sound of that name 'Victor,' my colleague's memories, before so confused, became instantaneously clear. Previous to entering our service, he had been in the horse business

—a votary of the turf; as such he had often seen the brilliant '*sportman*,' Victor de Mauléon; sometimes talked to him. Yes, that was the voice—the slight Norman intonation (Victor de Mauléon's father had it strongly, and Victor had passed some of his early childhood in Normandy), the subdued modulation of speech which had made so polite the offence to men, or so winning the courtship to women—that was Victor de Mauléon. But why there in that disguise? What was his real business and object? My *confrère* had no time allowed to him to prosecute such inquiries. Whether Victor or the rich malcontent had observed him at their heels, and feared he might have overheard their words, I know not, but the next day appeared in one of the popular journals circulating among the *ouvriers*, a paragraph stating that a Paris spy had been seen at Lyons, warning all honest men against his machinations, and containing a tolerably accurate description of his person. And that very day, on venturing forth, my estimable colleague suddenly found himself hustled by a ferocious throng, from whose hands he was with great difficulty rescued by the municipal guard. He left Lyons that night; and for recompense of his services received a sharp reprimand from his chief. He had committed the worst offence in our profession, *trop de zèle*. Having only heard the outlines of this story from another, I repaired to my *confrère* after my last interview with Monsieur, and learned what I now tell you from his own lips. As he was not in my branch of the service, I could not order him to return to Lyons; and I doubt whether his chief would have allowed it. But I went to Lyons myself, and there ascertained that our supposed Vicomte had left that town for Paris some months ago, not long after the adventure of my colleague. The man bore a very good character generally—was said to be very honest and inoffensive: and the notice taken of him by persons of higher rank was attributed generally to a respect for his talents, and not on account of any sympathy in political opinions. I found that the *confrère* mentioned, and who alone could identify M. de Mauléon in the disguise which the Vicomte had assumed, was absent on one of those missions abroad in which he is chiefly employed. I had to wait for his return, and it was only the day before yesterday that I obtained the following particulars.

M. de Mauléon bears the same name as he did at Lyons —that name is Jean Lebeau; he exercises the ostensible profession of a 'letter-writer,' and a sort of adviser on business among the workmen and petty *bourgeoisie*, and he nightly frequents the *Café Jean Jacques, Rue * * *, Faubourg Montmartre.* It is not yet quite half-past eight, and no doubt, you could see him at the *café* this very night, if you thought proper to go."

"Excellent! I will go! Describe him!"

"Alas! that is exactly what I cannot do at present. For after hearing what I now tell you, I put the same request, you do to my colleague, when, before he could answer me, he was summoned to the *bureau* of his chief, promising to return and give me the requisite description. He did not return. And I find that he was compelled, on quitting his chief, to seize the first train starting for Lille upon an important political investigation which brooked no delay. He will be back in a few days, and then Monsieur shall have the description."

"Nay; I think I will seize time by the forelock, and try my chance to-night. If the man be really a conspirator, and it looks likely enough, who knows but what he may see quick reason to take alarm and vanish from Paris at any hour? *Café Jean Jacques, Rue * * **—I will go. Stay; you have seen Victor de Mauléon in his youth: what was he like then?"

"Tall — slender — but broad-shouldered — very erect — carrying his head high — a profusion of dark curls — a small black moustache — fair clear complexion — light-coloured eyes with dark lashes — *fort bel homme.* But he will not look like that now."

"His present age?"

"Forty-seven or forty-eight. But before you go, I must beg you to consider well what you are about. It is evident that M. de Mauléon has some strong reason, whatever it be, for merging his identity in that of Jean Lebeau. I presume, therefore, that you could scarcely go up to M. Lebeau, when you have discovered him, and say, 'Pray, M. le Vicomte, can you give me some tidings of your niece, Louise Duval?' If you thus accosted him, you might possibly bring some danger on yourself, but you would certainly gain no information from him."

"True."

"On the other hand, if you make his acquaintance as M. Lebeau, how can you assume him to know anything about Louise Duval?"

"*Parbleu!* M. Renard, you try to toss me aside on both horns of the dilemma; but it seems to me that, if I once make his acquaintance as M. Lebeau, I might gradually and cautiously feel my way as to the best mode of putting the question to which I seek reply. I suppose, too, that the man must be in very poor circumstances to adopt so humble a calling, and that a small sum of money may smooth all difficulties."

"I am not so sure of that," said M. Renard, thoughtfully; "but grant that money may do so, and grant also that the Vicomte, being a needy man, has become a very unscrupulous one,—is there anything in your motives for discovering Louise Duval which might occasion you trouble and annoyance, if it were divined by a needy and unscrupulous man?—anything which might give him a power of threat or exaction? Mind, I am not asking you to tell me any secret you have reasons for concealing, but I suggest that it might be prudent if you did not let M. Lebeau know your real name and rank—if, in short, you could follow his example, and adopt a disguise. But no; when I think of it, you would doubtless be so unpractised in the art of disguise, that he would detect you at once to be other than you seem; and if suspecting you of spying into his secrets, and if those secrets be really of a political nature, your very life might not be safe."

"Thank you for your hint—the disguise is an excellent idea, and combines amusement with precaution. That this Victor de Mauléon must be a very unprincipled and dangerous man is, I think, abundantly clear. Granting that he was innocent of all design of robbery in the affair of the jewels, still, the offence which he did own—that of admitting himself at night by a false key into the rooms of a wife, whom he sought to surprise or terrify into dishonour—was a villanous action; and his present course of life is sufficiently mysterious to warrant the most unfavourable supposition. Besides, there is another motive for concealing my name from him: you say that he once had a duel with a Vane, who was very probably my father, and I have

no wish to expose myself to the chance of his turning up in London some day, and seeking to renew there the acquaintance that I had courted at Paris. As for my skill in playing any part I may assume, do not fear; I am no novice in that. In my younger days I was thought clever in private theatricals, especially in the transformations of appearance which belong to light comedy and farce. Wait a few minutes, and you shall see."

Graham then retreated into his bedroom, and in a few minutes reappeared so changed, that Renard at first glance took him for a stranger. He had doffed his dress—which habitually, when in Capitals, was characterised by the quiet, indefinable elegance that to a man of the great world, high-bred and young, seems "to the manner born"—for one of those coarse suits which Englishmen are wont to wear in their travels, and by which they are represented in French or German caricatures,—loose jacket of tweed,—with redundant pockets, waistcoat to match, short dust-coloured trousers. He had combed his hair straight over his forehead, which, as I have said somewhere before, appeared in itself to alter the character of his countenance, and, without any resort to paints or cosmetics, had somehow or other given to the expression of his face an impudent, low-bred expression, with a glass screwed on to his right eye—such a look as a cockney journeyman, wishing to pass for a "swell" about town, may cast on a servant-maid in the pit of a suburban theatre.

"Will it do, old fellow?" he exclaimed, in a rollicking, swaggering tone of voice, speaking French with a villanous British accent.

"Perfectly," said Renard, laughing. "I offer my compliments, and if ever you are ruined, Monsieur, I will promise you a place in our police. Only one caution,—take care not to overdo your part."

"Right. A quarter to nine—I'm off."

CHAPTER VI.

THERE is generally a brisk exhilaration of spirits in the return to any special amusement or light accomplishment, associated with the pleasant memories of earlier youth; and remarkably so, I believe, when the amusement or accomplishment has been that of the amateur stage-player. Certainly I have known persons of very grave pursuits, of very dignified character and position, who seem to regain the vivacity of boyhood when disguising look and voice for a part in some drawing-room comedy or charade. I might name statesmen of solemn repute rejoicing to raise and to join in a laugh at their expense in such travesty of their habitual selves.

The reader must not therefore be surprised, nor, I trust, deem it inconsistent with the more serious attributes of Graham's character, if the Englishman felt the sort of joyous excitement I describe, as, in his way to the *Café Jean Jacques*, he meditated the *rôle* he had undertaken; and the joyousness was heightened beyond the mere holiday sense of humoristic pleasantry by the sanguine hope that much to effect his lasting happiness might result from the success of the object for which his disguise was assumed.

It was just twenty minutes past nine when he arrived at the *Café Jean Jacques*. He dismissed the *fiacre* and entered. The apartment devoted to customers comprised two large rooms. The first was the *café* properly speaking; the second, opening on it, was the billiard-room. Conjecturing that he should probably find the person of whom he was in quest employed at the billiard-table, Graham passed thither at once. A tall man, who might be seven-and-forty, with a long black beard, slightly grizzled, was at play with a young man of perhaps twenty-eight, who gave him odds—as better players of twenty-eight ought to give odds to a player, though originally of equal force, whose eye is not so quick, whose hand is not so steady, as they were twenty years ago. Said Graham to himself, "The bearded man is

my Vicomte." He called for a cup of coffee, and seated himself on a bench at the end of the room.

The bearded man was far behind in the game. It was his turn to play; the balls were placed in the most awkward position for him. Graham himself was a fair billiard-player, both in the English and the French game. He said to himself, "No man who can make a cannon there should accept odds." The bearded man made a cannon; the bearded man continued to make cannons; the bearded man did not stop till he had won the game. The gallery of spectators was enthusiastic. Taking care to speak in very bad, very English, French, Graham expressed to one of the enthusiasts seated beside him his admiration of the bearded man's playing, and ventured to ask if the bearded man were a professonal or an amateur player.

"Monsieur," replied the enthusiast, taking a short cutty-pipe from his mouth, "it is an amateur, who has been a great player in his day, and is so proud that he always takes less odds than he ought of a younger man. It is not once in a month that he comes out as he has done to-night; but to-night he has steadied his hand. He has had six *petits verres*."

"Ah, indeed! Do you know his name?"

"I should think so: he buried my father, my two aunts, and my wife."

"Buried?" said Graham, more and more British in his accent; "I don't understand."

"Monsieur, you are English."

"I confess it."

"And a stranger to the Faubourg Montmartre."

"True."

"Or you would have heard of M. Giraud, the liveliest member of the State Company for conducting funerals. They are going to play *La Poule*."

Much disconcerted, Graham retreated into the *café*, and seated himself haphazard at one of the small tables. Glancing round the room, he saw no one in whom he could conjecture the once brilliant Vicomte.

The company appeared to him sufficiently decent, and especially what may be called local. There were some *blouses* drinking wine, no doubt of the cheapest and thinnest; some in rough, coarse dresses, drinking beer. These were

evidently English, Belgian, or German artisans. At one table, four young men, who looked like small journeymen, were playing cards. At three other tables, men older, better dressed, probably shopkeepers, were playing dominoes. Graham scrutinised these last, but among them all could detect no one corresponding to his ideal of the Vicomte de Mauléon. "Probably," thought he, "I am too late, or perhaps he will not be here this evening. At all events, I will wait a quarter of an hour." Then, the *garçon* approaching his table, he deemed it necessary to call for something, and still, in strong English accent, asked for lemonade and an evening journal. The *garçon* nodded and went his way. A monsieur at the round table next his own politely handed to him the "Galignani," saying in very good English, though unmistakably the good English of a Frenchmen, "The English journal, at your service."

Graham bowed his head, accepted the "Galignani," and inspected his courteous neighbour. A more respectable-looking man no Englishman could see in an English country town. He wore an unpretending flaxen wig, with limp whiskers that met at the chin, and might originally have been the same colour as the wig, but were now of a pale grey—no beard, no moustache. He was dressed with the scrupulous cleanliness of a sober citizen,—a high white neckcloth, with a large old-fashioned pin, containing a little knot of hair, covered with glass or crystal, and bordered with a black framework, in which were inscribed letters—evidently a morning pin, hallowed to the memory of lost spouse or child,—a man who, in England, might be the mayor of a cathedral town, at least the town-clerk. He seemed suffering from some infirmity of vision, for he wore green spectacles. The expression of his face was very mild and gentle; apparently he was about sixty years old—somewhat more.

Graham took kindly to his neighbour, insomuch that, in return for the "Galignani," he offered him a cigar, lighting one himself.

His neighbour refused politely.

"*Merci!* I never smoke—never; *mon médecin* forbids it. If I could be tempted, it would be by an English cigar. Ah, how you English beat us in all things—your ships, your iron, your *tabac*—which you do not grow!"

This speech, rendered literally as we now render it, may give the idea of a somewhat vulgar speaker. But there was something in the man's manner, in his smile, in his courtesy, which did not strike Graham as vulgar; on the contrary, he thought within himself, "How instinctive to all Frenchmen good breeding is!"

Before, however, Graham had time to explain to his amiable neighbour the politico-economical principle according to which England, growing no tobacco, had tobacco much better than France which did grow it, a rosy middle-aged monsieur made his appearance, saying hurriedly to Graham's neighbour, "I'm afraid I'm late, but there is still a good half-hour before us if you will give me my revenge."

"Willingly, M. Georges. *Garçon*, the dominoes."

"Have you been playing at billiards?" asked M. Georges.

"Yes, two games."

"With success?"

"I won the first, and lost the second through the defect of my eyesight; the game depended on a stroke which would have been easy to an infant—I missed it."

Here the dominoes arrived, and M. Georges began shuffling them; the other turned to Graham and asked politely if he understood the game.

"A little, but not enough to comprehend why it is said to require so much skill."

"It is chiefly an affair of memory with me; but M. Georges, my opponent, has the talent of combination, which I have not."

"Nevertheless," replied M. Georges, gruffly, "you are not easily beaten; it is for you to play first, M. Lebeau."

Graham almost started. Was it possible! This mild, limp-whiskered, flaxen-wigged man, Victor de Maulcon, the Don Juan of his time; the last person in the room he should have guessed. Yet, now examining his neighbour with more attentive eye he wondered at his stupidity in not having recognised at once the *ci-devant gentilhomme* and *beau garçon*. It happens frequently that our imagination plays us this trick; we form to ourselves an idea of some one eminent for good or for evil—a poet, a statesman, a general, a murderer, a swindler, a thief: the man is before us, and our ideas have gone into so different a groove that

he does not excite a suspicion. We are told who he is, and immediately detect a thousand things that ought to have proved his identity.

Looking thus again with rectified vision at the false Lebeau, Graham observed an elegance and delicacy of feature which might, in youth, have made the countenance very handsome, and rendered it still good-looking, nay, prepossessing. He now noticed, too, the slight Norman accent, its native harshness of breadth subdued into the modulated tones which bespoke the habits of polished society. Above all, as M. Lebeau moved his dominoes with one hand, not shielding his pieces with the other (as M. Georges warily did), but allowing it to rest carelessly on the table, he detected the hands of the French aristocrat; hands that had never done work—never (like those of the English noble of equal birth) been embrowned or freckled, or roughened or enlarged by early practice in athletic sports; but hands seldom seen save in the higher circles of Parisian life—partly perhaps of hereditary formation, partly owing their texture to great care begun in early youth, and continued mechanically in after life—with long taper fingers and polished nails; white and delicate as those of a woman, but not slight, not feeble; nervous and sinewy as those of a practised swordsman.

Graham watched the play, and Lebeau good-naturedly explained to him its complications as it proceeded; though the explanation, diligently attended to by M. Georges, lost Lebeau the game.

The dominoes were again shuffled, and during that operation M. Georges said, "By the way, M. Lebeau, you promised to find me a *locataire* for my second floor; have you succeeded?"

"Not yet. Perhaps you had better advertise in *Les Petites Affiches*. You ask too much for the *habitués* of this neighbourhood—100 francs a-month."

"But the lodging is furnished, and well too, and has four rooms. One hundred francs are not much."

A thought flashed upon Graham—"Pardon, Monsieur," he said, "have you an *appartement de garçon* to let furnished?"

"Yes, Monsieur, a charming one. Are you in search of an apartment?"

"I have some idea of taking one, but only by the month. I am but just arrived at Paris, and I have business which may keep me here a few weeks. I do but require a bedroom and a small cabinet, and the rent must be modest. I am not a *milord*."

"I am sure we could arrange, Monsieur," said M. Georges, "though I could not well divide my *logement*. But 100 francs a-month is not much!"

"I fear it is more than I can afford; however, if you will give me your address, I will call and see the rooms,—say the day after to-morrow. Between this and then, I expect letters which may more clearly decide my movements."

"If the apartments suit you," said M. Lebeau, "you will at least be in the house of a very honest man, which is more than can be said of every one who lets furnished apartments. The house, too, has a *concierge*, with a handy wife who will arrange your rooms and provide you with coffee—or tea, which you English prefer—if you breakfast at home."

Here M. Georges handed a card to Graham, and asked what hour he would call.

"About twelve, if that hour is convenient," said Graham, rising. "I presume there is a *restaurant* in the neighbourhood where I could dine reasonably."

"*Je crois bien*—half-a-dozen. I can recommend to you one where you can dine *en prince* for 30 sous. And if you are at Paris on business, and want any letters written in private, I can also recommend to you my friend here, M. Lebeau. Ay, and on affairs his advice is as good as a lawyer's, and his fee a *bagatelle*."

"Don't believe all that M. Georges so flatteringly says of me," put in M. Lebeau, with a modest half-smile, and in English. "I should tell you that I, like yourself, am recently arrived at Paris, having bought the business and goodwill of my predecessor in the apartment I occupy; and it is only to the respect due to his antecedents, and on the score of a few letters of recommendation which I bring from Lyons, that I can attribute the confidence shown to me, a stranger in this neighbourhood. Still I have some knowledge of the world, and I am always glad if I can be of service to the English. I love the English"—he said this with a sort of melancholy earnestness which seemed sincere;

and then added in a more careless tone—"I have met with much kindness from them in the course of a chequered life."

"You seem a very good fellow—in fact a regular trump, M. Lebeau," replied Graham, in the same language. "Give me your address. To say truth, I am a very poor French scholar, as you must have seen, and am awfully bother-headed how to manage some correspondence on matters with which I am intrusted by my employer, so that it is a lucky chance which has brought me acquainted with you."

M. Lebeau inclined his head gracefully, and drew from a very neat morocco case a card, which Graham took and pocketed. Then he paid for his coffee and lemonade, and returned home well satisfied with the evening's adventure.

CHAPTER VII.

THE next morning Graham sent for M. Renard, and consulted with that experienced functionary as to the details of the plan of action which he had revolved during the hours of a sleepless night.

"In conformity with your advice," said he, "not to expose myself to the chance of future annoyance, by confiding to a man so dangerous as the false Lebeau my name and address, I propose to take the lodging offered to me, as Mr. Lamb, an attorney's clerk, commissioned to get in certain debts, and transact other matters of business, on behalf of his employer's clients. I suppose there will be no difficulty with the police in this change of name, now that passports for the English are not necessary?"

"Certainly not. You will have no trouble in that respect."

"I shall thus be enabled very naturally to improve acquaintance with the professional letter-writer, and find an easy opportunity to introduce the name of Louise Duval. My chief difficulty, I fear, not being a practical actor, will be to keep up consistently the queer sort of language I have adopted, both in French and in English. I have too sharp a critic in a man so consummate himself in stage trick and disguise as M. Lebeau, not to feel the necessity of getting through my *rôle* as quickly as I can. Meanwhile, can you recommend me to some *magasin* where I can obtain a suitable change of costume? I can't always wear a travelling suit, and I must buy linen of coarser texture than mine, and with the initials of my new name inscribed on it."

"Quite right to study such details; I will introduce you to a *magasin* near the Temple, where you will find all you want."

"Next, have you any friends or relations in the provinces unknown to M. Lebeau, to whom I might be supposed to write about debts or business matters, and from whom I might have replies?"

"I will think over it, and manage that for you very easily. Your letters shall find their way to me, and I will dictate the answers."

After some further conversation on that business, M. Renard made an appointment to meet Graham at a *café* near the Temple later in the afternoon, and took his departure.

Graham then informed his *laquais de place* that, though he kept on his lodgings, he was going into the country for a few days, and should not want the man's services till he returned. He therefore dismissed and paid him off at once, so that the *laquais* might not observe, when he quitted his rooms the next day, that he took with him no change of clothes, &c.

CHAPTER VIII.

GRAHAM VANE has been for some days in the apartment rented of M. Georges. He takes it in the name of Mr. Lamb—a name wisely chosen, less common than Thomson and Smith, less likely to be supposed an assumed name, yet common enough not to be able easily to trace it to any special family. He appears, as he had proposed, in the character of an agent employed by a solicitor in London to execute sundry commissions, and to collect certain outstanding debts. There is no need to mention the name of the solicitor; if there were, he could give the name of his own solicitor, to whose discretion he could trust implicitly. He dresses and acts up to his assumed character with the skill of a man who, like the illustrious Charles Fox, has, though in private representations, practised the stage-play in which Demosthenes said the triple art of oratory consisted—who has seen a great deal of the world, and has that adaptability of intellect which knowledge of the world lends to one who is so thoroughly in earnest as to his end that he agrees to be sportive as to his means.

The kind of language he employs when speaking English to Lebeau is that suited to the *rôle* of a dapper young underling of vulgar mind habituated to vulgar companionships. I feel it due, if not to Graham himself, at least to the memory of the dignified orator whose name he inherits, so to modify and soften the hardy style of that peculiar diction in which he disguises his birth and disgraces his culture, that it is only here and there that I can venture to indicate the general tone of it. But in order to supply my deficiencies therein, the reader has only to call to mind the forms of phraseology which polite novelists in vogue, especially young-lady novelists, ascribe to well-born gentlemen, and more emphatically to those in the higher ranks of the Peerage. No doubt Graham, in his capacity of critic, had been compelled to read, in order to review, those contributions to refined literature, and had familiarised himself to a

vein of conversation abounding with "swell," and "stunner," and "awfully jolly," in its libel on manners and outrage on taste.

He has attended nightly the *Café Jean Jacques;* he has improved acquaintance with M. Georges and M. Lebeau; he has played at billiards, he has played at dominoes, with the latter. He has been much surprised at the unimpeachable honesty which M. Lebeau has exhibited in both these games. In billiards, indeed, a man cannot cheat except by disguising his strength; it is much the same in dominoes, —it is skill combined with luck, as in whist; but in whist there are modes of cheating which dominoes do not allow, —you can't mark a domino as you can a card. It was perfectly clear to Graham that M. Lebeau did not gain a livelihood by billiards or dominoes at the *Café Jean Jacques*. In the former he was not only a fair but a generous player. He played exceedingly well, despite his spectacles; but he gave, with something of a Frenchman's lofty *fanfaronnade*, larger odds to his adversary than his play justified. In dominoes, where such odds could not well be given, he insisted on playing such small stakes as two or three francs might cover. In short, M. Lebeau puzzled Graham. All about M. Lebeau, his manner, his talk, was irreproachable, and baffled suspicion; except in this, Graham gradually discovered that the *café* had a *quasi* political character. Listening to talkers round him, he overheard much that might well have shocked the notions of a moderate Liberal; much that held in disdain the objects to which, in 1869, an English Radical directed his aspirations. Vote by ballot, universal suffrage, &c.—such objects the French had already attained. By the talkers at the *Café Jean Jacques* they were deemed to be the tricky contrivances of tyranny. In fact, the talk was more scornful of what Englishmen understand by radicalism or democracy than Graham ever heard from the lips of an ultra-Tory. It assumed a strain of philosophy far above the vulgar squabbles of ordinary party politicians—a philosophy which took for its fundamental principles the destruction of religion and of private property. These two objects seemed dependent the one on the other. The philosophers of the *Jean Jacques* held with that expounder of Internationalism, Eugene Dupont, "Nous ne voulons plus de religion, car les religions étouf-

fent l'intelligence."* Now and then, indeed, a dissentient voice was raised as to the existence of a Supreme Being, but, with one exception, it soon sank into silence. No voice was raised in defence of private property. These sages appeared for the most part to belong to the class of *ouvriers* or artisans. Some of them were foreigners—Belgian, German, English; all seemed well off for their calling. Indeed they must have had comparatively high wages, to judge by their dress and the money they spent on regaling themselves. The language of several was well chosen, at times eloquent. Some brought with them women who seemed respectable, and who often joined in the conversation, especially when it turned upon the law of marriage as a main obstacle to all personal liberty and social improvement. If this was a subject on which the women did not all agree, still they discussed it, without prejudice and with admirable *sang froid*. Yet many of them looked like wives and mothers. Now and then a young journeyman brought with him a young lady of more doubtful aspect, but such a couple kept aloof from the others. Now and then, too, a man evidently of higher station than that of *ouvrier*, and who was received by the philosophers with courtesy and respect, joined one of the tables and ordered a bowl of punch for general participation. In such occasional visitors, Graham, still listening, detected a writer of the press; now and then, a small artist, or actor, or medical student. Among the *habitués* there was one man, an *ouvrier*, in whom Graham could not help feeling an interest. He was called Monnier, sometimes more familiarly Armand, his baptismal appellation. This man had a bold and honest expression of countenance. He talked like one who, if he had not read much, had thought much on the subjects he loved to discuss. He argued against the capital of employers quite as ably as Mr. Mill has argued against the rights of property in land. He was still more eloquent against the laws of marriage and heritage. But his was the one voice not to be silenced in favour of a Supreme Being. He had at least the courage of his opinions, and was always thoroughly in earnest. M. Lebeau seemed to

* Discours par Eugene Dupont à la Clôture du Congrès de Bruxelles, Sept. 3, 1868.

know this man, and honoured him with a nod and a smile, when passing by him to the table he generally occupied. This familiarity with a man of that class, and of opinions so extreme, excited Graham's curiosity. One evening he said to Lebeau, "A queer fellow that you have just nodded to."

"How so?"

"Well, he has queer notions."

"Notions shared, I believe, by many of your countrymen?"

"I should think not many. Those poor simpletons yonder may have caught them from their French fellow-workmen, but I don't think that even the *gobemouches* in our National Reform Society open their mouths to swallow such wasps."

"Yet I believe the association to which most of those *ouvriers* belong had its origin in England."

"Indeed! what association?"

"The International."

"Ah, I have heard of that."

Lebeau turned his green spectacles full on Graham's face as he said slowly, "And what do you think of it?"

Graham prudently checked the disparaging reply that first occurred to him, and said, "I know so little about it that I would rather ask you."

"I think it might become formidable if it found able leaders who knew how to use it. Pardon me—how came you to know of this *café?* Were you recommended to it?"

"No; I happened to be in this neighbourhood on business, and walked in, as I might into any other *café*."

"You don't interest yourself in the great social questions which are agitated below the surface of this best of all possible worlds?"

"I can't say that I trouble my head much about them."

"A game at dominoes before M. Georges arrives?"

"Willingly. Is M. Georges one of those agitators below the surface?"

"No indeed. It is for you to play."

Here M. Georges arrived, and no further conversation on political or social questions ensued.

Graham had already called more than once at M. Lebeau's office, and asked him to put into good French various

letters on matters of business, the subjects of which had been furnished by M. Renard. The office was rather imposing and stately, considering the modest nature of M. Lebeau's ostensible profession. It occupied the entire ground-floor of a corner house, with a front-door at one angle and a back-door at the other. The anteroom to his cabinet, and in which Graham had generally to wait some minutes before he was introduced, was generally well filled, and not only by persons who, by their dress and outward appearance, might be fairly supposed sufficiently illiterate to require his aid as polite letter-writers—not only by servant maids and *grisettes*, by sailors, zouaves, and journeymen workmen—but not unfrequently by clients evidently belonging to a higher, or at least a richer, class of society, —men with clothes made by a fashionable tailor—men, again, who, less fashionably attired, looked like opulent tradesmen and fathers of well-to-do families—the first generally young, the last generally middle-aged. All these denizens of a higher world were introduced by a saturnine clerk into M. Lebeau's reception-room, very quickly and in precedence of the *ouvriers* and *grisettes*.

"What can this mean?" thought Graham. "Is it really that this humble business avowed is the cloak to some political conspiracy concealed—the International Association?" And, so pondering, the clerk one day singled him from the crowd and admitted him into M. Lebeau's cabinet. Graham thought the time had now arrived when he might safely approach the subject that had brought him to the Faubourg Montmartre.

"You are very good," said Graham, speaking in the English of a young earl in our elegant novels—"you are very good to let me in while you have so many swells and nobs waiting for you in the other room. But, I say, old fellow, you have not the cheek to tell me that they want you to correct their cocker or spoon for them by proxy?"

"Pardon me," answered M. Lebeau in French, "if I prefer my own language in replying to you. I speak the English I learned many years ago, and your language in the *beau monde*, to which you evidently belong, is strange to me. You are quite right, however, in your surmise that I have other clients than those who, like yourself, think I could correct their verbs or their spelling. I have seen a

great deal of the world,—I know something of it, and something of the law; so that many persons come to me for advice and for legal information on terms more moderate than those of an *avoué*. But my antechamber is full, I am pressed for time; excuse me if I ask you to say at once in what I can be agreeable to you to-day."

"Ah!" said Graham, assuming a very earnest look, "you do know the world, that is clear; and you do know the law of France—eh?"

"Yes, a little."

"What I wanted to say at present may have something to do with French law, and I meant to ask you either to recommend to me a sharp lawyer, or to tell me how I can best get at your famous police here."

"Police?"

"I think I may require the service of one of those officers whom we in England call detectives; but if you are busy now, I can call to-morrow."

"I spare you two minutes. Say at once, dear Monsieur, what you want with law or police?"

"I am instructed to find out the address of a certain Louise Duval, daughter of a drawing-master named Adolphe Duval, living in the Rue —— in the year 1848."

Graham, while he thus said, naturally looked Lebeau in the face—not pryingly, not significantly, but as a man generally does look in the face the other man whom he accosts seriously. The change in the face he regarded was slight, but it was unmistakable. It was the sudden meeting of the eyebrows, accompanied with the sudden jerk of the shoulder and bend of the neck, which betoken a man taken by surprise, and who pauses to reflect before he replies. His pause was but momentary.

"For what object is this address required?"

"That I don't know; but evidently for some advantage to Madame or Mademoiselle Duval, if still alive, because my employer authorises me to spend no less than £100 in ascertaining where she is, if alive, or where she was buried, if dead; and if other means fail, I am instructed to advertise to the effect—'That if Louise Duval, or, in case of her death, any children of hers living in the year 1849, will communicate with some person whom I may appoint at Paris—such intelligence, authenticated, may prove to

the advantage of the party advertised for.' I am, however, told not to resort to this means without consulting either with a legal adviser or the police."

"Hem!—have you inquired at the house where this lady was, you say, living in 1848?"

"Of course I have done that; but very clumsily, I daresay—through a friend—and learned nothing. But I must not keep you now. I think I shall apply at once to the police. What should I say when I get to the *bureau?*"

"Stop, Monsieur, stop. I do not advise you to apply to the police. It would be waste of time and money. Allow me to think over the matter. I shall see you this evening at the *Café Jean Jacques* at eight o'clock. Till then do nothing."

"All right: I obey you. The whole thing is out of my way of business—awfully. *Bon jour.*"

CHAPTER IX.

PUNCTUALLY at eight o'clock Graham Vane had taken his seat at a corner table at the remote end of the *Café Jean Jacques*, called for his cup of coffee and his evening journal, and awaited the arrival of M. Lebeau. His patience was not tasked long. In a few minutes the Frenchman entered, paused at the *comptoir*, as was his habit, to address a polite salutation to the well-dressed lady who there presided, nodded as usual to Armand Monnier, then glanced round, recognised Graham with a smile, and approached his table with the quiet grace of movement by which he was distinguished.

Seating himself opposite to Graham, and speaking in a voice too low to be heard by others, and in French, he then said—

"In thinking over your communication this morning, it strikes me as probable, perhaps as certain, that this Louise Duval or her children, if she have any, must be entitled to some moneys bequeathed to her by a relation or friend in England. What say you to that assumption, M. Lamb?"

"You are a sharp fellow," answered Graham. "Just what I say to myself. Why else should I be instructed to go to such expense in finding her out? Most likely, if one can't trace her, or her children born before the date named, any such moneys will go to some one else; and that some one else, whoever he be, has commissioned my employer to find out. But I don't imagine any sum due to her or her heirs can be much, or that the matter is very important; for, if so, the thing would not be carelessly left in the hands of one of the small fry like myself, and clapped in along with a lot of other business as an off-hand job."

"Will you tell me who employed you?"

"No, I don't feel authorised to do that at present; and I don't see the necessity of it. It seems to me, on consideration, a matter for the police to ferret out; only, as I asked before, how should I get at the police?"

"That is not difficult. It is just possible that I might help you better than any lawyer or any detective."

"Why, did you ever know this Louise Duval?"

"Excuse me, M. Lamb: you refuse me your full confidence; allow me to imitate your reserve."

"Oho!" said Graham; "shut up as close as you like; it is nothing to me. Only observe, there is this difference between us, that I am employed by another. He does not authorise me to name him; and if I did commit that indiscretion, I might lose my bread and cheese. Whereas you have nobody's secret to guard but your own, in saying whether or not you ever knew a Madame or Mademoiselle Duval. And if you have some reason for not getting me the information I am instructed to obtain, that is also a reason for not troubling you farther. And after all, old boy" (with a familiar slap on Lebeau's stately shoulder) "after all, it is I who would employ you; you don't employ me. And if you find out the lady, it is you who would get the £100, not I."

M. Lebeau mechanically brushed, with a light movement of hand, the shoulder which the Englishmen had so pleasantly touched, drew himself and chair some inches back, and said, slowly—

"M. Lamb, let us talk as gentleman to gentleman. Put aside the question of money altogether, I must first know why your employer wants to hunt out this poor Louise Duval. It may be to her injury, and I would do her none if you offered thousands where you offer pounds. I forestall the condition of mutual confidence; I own that I have known her—it is many years ago; and, M. Lamb, though a Frenchman very often injures a woman from love, he is in a worse plight for bread and cheese than I am if he injures her for money."

"Is he thinking of the duchess's jewels?" thought Graham.

"Bravo, *mon vieux*," he said, aloud; "but as I don't know what my employer's motive in his commission is, perhaps you can enlighten me. How could his inquiry injure Louise Duval?"

"I cannot say; but you English have the power to divorce your wives. Louise Duval may have married an Englishman, separated from him, and he wants to know

where he can find, in order to criminate and divorce her, or it may be to insist on her to return to him."

"Bosh! that is not likely."

"Perhaps, then, some English friend she may have known has left her a bequest, which would of course lapse to some one else if she be not living."

"By gad!" cried Graham, "I think you hit the right nail on the head: *c'est cela.* But what then?"

"Well, if I thought any substantial benefit to Louise Duval might result from the success of your inquiry, I would really see if it were in my power to help you. But I must have time to consider."

"How long?"

"I can't exactly say; perhaps three or four days."

"*Bon!* I will wait. Here comes M. Georges. I leave you to dominoes and him. Good-night."

Late that night M. Lebeau was seated alone in a chamber connected with the cabinet in which he received visitors. A ledger was open before him, which he scanned with careful eyes, no longer screened by spectacles. The survey seemed to satisfy him. He murmured, "It suffices —the time has come;" closed the book—returned it to his bureau, which he locked up—and then wrote in cipher the letter here reduced into English:—

"DEAR AND NOBLE FRIEND,—Events march; the Empire is everywhere undermined. Our treasury has thriven in my hands; the sums subscribed and received by me through you have become more than quadrupled by advantageous speculations, in which M. Georges has been a most trustworthy agent. A portion of them I have continued to employ in the mode suggested—viz., in bringing together men discreetly chosen as being in their various ways representatives and ringleaders of the motley varieties that, when united at the right moment, form a Parisian mob. But from that right moment we are as yet distant. Before we can call passion into action, we must prepare opinion for change. I propose now to devote no inconsiderable portion of our fund towards the inauguration of a journal which shall gradually give voice to our designs. Trust to me to insure its success, and obtain the aid of writers who will have no notion of the uses to which they ultimately contribute.

Now that the time has come to establish for ourselves an organ in the press, addressing higher orders of intelligence than those which are needed to destroy, and incapable of reconstructing, the time has also arrived for the reappearance in his proper name and rank of the man in whom you take so gracious an interest. In vain you have pressed him to do so before; till now he had not amassed together, by the slow process of petty gains and constant savings, with such additions as prudent speculations on his own account might contribute, the modest means necessary to his resumed position. And as he always contended against your generous offers, no consideration should ever tempt him either to appropriate to his personal use a single *sou* intrusted to him for a public purpose, or to accept from friendship the pecuniary aid which would abase him into the hireling of a cause. No! Victor de Mauléon despises too much the tools that he employs to allow any man hereafter to say, 'Thou also wert a tool, and hast been paid for thy uses.'

"But to restore the victim of calumny to his rightful place in this gaudy world, stripped of youth and reduced in fortune, is a task that may well seem impossible. To-morrow he takes the first step towards the achievement of the impossible. Experience is no bad substitute for youth, and ambition is made stronger by the goad of poverty.

"Thou shalt hear of his news soon."

BOOK V.

BOOK V.

CHAPTER I.

THE next day at noon M. Louvier was closeted in his study with M. Gandrin.

"Yes," cried Louvier, "I have behaved very handsomely to the *beau Marquis*. No one can say to the contrary."

"True," answered Gandrin. "Besides the easy terms for the transfer of the mortgages, that free bonus of 1000 louis is a generous and noble act of munificence."

"Is it not! and my youngster has already begun to do with it as I meant and expected. He has taken a fine apartment; he has bought a *coupé* and horses; he has placed himself in the hands of the Chevalier de Finisterre; he is entered at the Jockey Club. *Parbleu*, the 1000 louis will be soon gone."

"And then?"

"And then!—why, he will have tasted the sweets of Parisian life. He will think with disgust of the *vieux manoir*. He can borrow no more. I must remain sole mortgagee, and I shall behave as handsomely in buying his estates as I have behaved in increasing his income."

Here a clerk entered and said "that a monsieur wished to see M. Louvier for a few minutes in private, on urgent business."

"Tell him to send in his card."

"He has declined to do so, but states that he has already the honour of your acquaintance."

"A writer in the press, perhaps; or is he an artist?"

"I have not seen him before, Monsieur, but he has the air *très comme il faut*."

"Well, you may admit him. I will not detain you longer, my dear Gandrin. My homages to Madame. *Bon jour*."

Louvier bowed out M. Gandrin, and then rubbed his

hands complacently. He was in high spirits. "Aha, my dear Marquis, thou art in my trap now. Would it were thy father instead," he muttered chucklingly, and then took his stand on the hearth, with his back to the fireless grate. There entered a gentleman exceedingly well dressed—dressed according to the fashion, but still as became one of ripe middle age, not desiring to pass for younger than he was.

He was tall, with a kind of lofty ease in his air and his movements; not slight of frame, but spare enough to disguise the strength and endurance which belong to sinews and thews of steel, freed from all superfluous flesh, broad across the shoulders, thin in the flanks. His dark hair had in youth been luxuriant in thickness and curl; it was now clipped short, and had become bare at the temples, but it still retained the lustre of its colour and the crispness of its ringlets. He wore neither beard nor moustache, and the darkness of his hair was contrasted by a clear fairness of complexion, healthful, though somewhat pale, and eyes of that rare grey tint which has in it no shade of blue—peculiar eyes, which give a very distinct character to the face. The man must have been singularly handsome in youth; he was handsome still, though probably in his forty-seventh or forty-eighth year, doubtless a very different kind of comeliness. The form of the features and the contour of the face were those that suit the rounded beauty of the Greek outline, and such beauty would naturally have been the attribute of the countenance in earlier days. But the cheeks were now thin, and with lines of care and sorrow between nostril and lip, so that the shape of the face seemed lengthened, and the features had become more salient.

Louvier gazed at his visitor with a vague idea that he had seen him before, and could not remember where or when; but, at all events, he recognised at the first glance a man of rank and of the great world.

"Pray be seated, Monsieur!" he said, resuming his own easy-chair.

The visitor obeyed the invitation with a very graceful bend of his head, drew his chair near to the financier's, stretched his limbs with the ease of a man making himself at home, and fixing his calm bright eyes quietly on Louvier, said, with a bland smile—

"My dear old friend, do you not remember me? You are less altered than I am."

Louvier stared hard and long; his lip fell, his cheek paled, and at last he faltered out, "*Ciel!* is it possible! Victor—the Vicomte de Mauléon?"

"At your service, my dear Louvier."

There was a pause; the financier was evidently confused and embarrassed, and not less evidently the visit of the "dear old friend" was unwelcome.

"Vicomte," he said at last, "this is indeed a surprise; I thought you had long since quitted Paris for good."

"'*L'homme propose*,' &c. I have returned, and mean to enjoy the rest of my days in the metropolis of the Graces and the Pleasures. What though we are not so young as we were, Louvier,—we have more vigour in us than the new generation; and though it may no longer befit us to renew the gay carousals of old, life has still excitements as vivid for the social temperament and ambitious mind. Yes, the *roi des viveurs* returns to Paris for a more solid throne than he filled before."

"Are you serious?"

"As serious as the French gaiety will permit one to be."

"Alas, M. le Vicomte! can you flatter yourself that you will regain the society you have quitted, and the name you have——"

Louvier stopped short; something in the Vicomte's eye daunted him.

"The name I have laid aside for convenience of travel. Princes travel incognito, and so may a simple *gentilhomme*. 'Regain my place in society,' say you? Yes; it is not that which troubles me."

"What does?"

"The consideration whether on a very modest income I can be sufficiently esteemed for myself to render that society more pleasant than ever. Ah, *mon cher!* why recoil? why so frightened? Do you think I am going to ask you for money? Have I ever done so since we parted? and did I ever do so before without repaying you? Bah! you *roturiers* are worse than the Bourbons. You never learn or unlearn. '*Fors non mutat genus.*'"

The magnificent *millionnaire*, accustomed to the homage of grandees from the faubourg and *lions* from the Chaussée

d'Antin, rose to his feet in superb wrath, less at the taunting words than at the haughtiness of mien with which they were uttered.

"Monsieur, I cannot permit you to address me in that tone. Do you mean to insult me?"

"Certainly not. Tranquillise your nerves, reseat yourself, and listen;—reseat yourself, I say."

Louvier dropped into his chair.

"No," resumed the Vicomte, politely, "I do not come here to insult you, neither do I come to ask money; I assume that I am in my rights when I ask M. Louvier what has become of Louise Duval?"

"Louise Duval! I know nothing about her."

"Possibly not now; but you did know her well enough, when we two parted, to be a candidate for her hand. You did know her enough to solicit my good offices in promotion of your suit; and you did, at my advice, quit Paris to seek her at Aix-la-Chapelle."

"What! have you, M. de Mauléon, not heard news of her since that day?"

"I decline to accept your question as an answer to mine. You went to Aix-la-Chapelle; you saw Louise Duval; at my urgent request she condescended to accept your hand."

"No, M. de Mauléon, she did not accept my hand. I did not even see her. The day before I arrived at Aix-la-Chapelle she had left it—not alone—left it with her lover."

"Her lover! You do not mean the miserable Englishman who——"

"No Englishman," interrupted Louvier, fiercely. "Enough that the step she took placed an eternal barrier between her and myself. I have never even sought to hear of her since that day. Vicomte, that woman was the one love of my life. I loved her, as you must have known, to folly—to madness. And how was my love requited? Ah! you open a very deep wound, M. le Vicomte."

"Pardon me, Louvier; I did not give you credit for feelings so keen and so genuine, nor did I think myself thus easily affected by matters belonging to a past life so remote from the present. For whom did Louise forsake you?"

"It matters not—he is dead."

"I regret to hear that; I might have avenged you."

"I need no one to avenge my wrong. Let this pass."

"Not yet. Louise, you say, fled with a seducer? So proud as she was, I can scarcely believe it."

"Oh, it was not with a *roturier* she fled; her pride would not have allowed that."

"He must have deceived her somehow.. Did she continue to live with him?"

"That question, at least, I can answer; for though I lost all trace of her life, his life was pretty well known to me till its end; and a very few months after she fled he was enchained to another. Let us talk of her no more."

"Ay, ay," muttered De Maulĕon, "some disgraces are not to be redeemed, and therefore not to be discussed. To me, though a relation, Louise Duval was but little known, and after what you tell me, I cannot dispute your right to say, 'talk of her no more.' You loved her, and she wronged you. My poor Louvier, pardon me if I made an old wound bleed afresh."

These words were said with a certain pathetic tenderness; they softened Louvier towards the speaker.

After a short pause the Vicomte swept his hand over his brow, as if to dismiss from his mind a painful and obtrusive thought; then with a changed expression of countenance—an expression frank and winning—with voice and with manner in which no vestige remained of the irony or the haughtiness with which he had resented the frigidity of his reception, he drew his chair still nearer to Louvier's, and resumed: "Our situations, Paul Louvier, are much changed since we two became friends. I then could say, 'Open sesame' to whatever recesses, forbidden to vulgar footsteps, the adventurer whom I took by the hand might wish to explore. In those days my heart was warm; I liked you, Louvier—honestly liked you. I think our personal acquaintance commenced in some gay gathering of young *viveurs*, whose behaviour to you offended my sense of good breeding?"

Louvier coloured, and muttered inaudibly.

De Maulĕon continued: "I felt it due to you to rebuke their incivilities, the more so as you evinced on that occasion your own superiority in sense and temper, permit me to add, with no lack of becoming spirit."

Louvier bowed his head, evidently gratified.

"From that day we became familiar. If any obligation to me were incurred, you would not have been slow to return it. On more than one occasion when I was rapidly wasting money—and money was plentiful with you—you generously offered me your purse. On more than one occasion I accepted the offer; and you would never have asked repayment if I had not insisted on repaying. I was no less grateful for your aid."

Louvier made a movement as if to extend his hand, but he checked the impulse.

"There was another attraction which drew me towards you. I recognised in your character a certain power in sympathy with that power which I imagined lay dormant in myself, and not to be found among the *freluquets* and *lions* who were my more habitual associates. Do you not remember some hours of serious talk we have had together when we lounged in the Tuileries, or sipped our coffee in the garden of the Palais Royal?—hours when we forgot that those were the haunts of idlers, and thought of the stormy actions affecting the history of the world of which they had been the scene—hours when I confided to you, as I confided to no other man, the ambitious hopes for the future which my follies in the present, alas! were hourly tending to frustrate?"

"Ay, I remember the starlit night; it was not in the gardens of the Tuileries nor in the Palais Royal,—it was on the Pont de la Concorde, on which we had paused, noting the starlight on the waters, that you said, pointing towards the walls of the *Corps Législatif*, 'Paul, when I once get into the Chamber, how long will it take me to become First Minister of France?'"

"Did I say so?—possibly; but I was too young then for admission to the Chamber, and I fancied I had so many years yet to spare in idle loiterings at the Fountain of Youth. Pass over these circumstances. You became in love with Louise. I told you her troubled history; it did not diminish your love; and then I frankly favoured your suit. You set out for Aix-la-Chapelle a day or two afterwards — then fell the thunderbolt which shattered my existence—and we have never met again till this hour. You did not receive me kindly, Paul Louvier."

"But," said Louvier, falteringly, "but since you refer to that thunderbolt, you cannot but be aware that—that——"

"I was subjected to a calumny which I expect those who have known me as well as you did to assist me now to refute."

"If it be really a calumny."

"Heavens, man! could you ever doubt *that?*" cried De Maulêon, with heat; "ever doubt that I would rather have blown out my brains than allowed them even to conceive the idea of a crime so base?"

"Pardon me," answered Louvier, meekly, "but I did not return to Paris for months after you had disappeared. My mind was unsettled by the news that awaited me at Aix; I sought to distract it by travel—visited Holland and England; and when I did return to Paris, all that I heard of your story was the darker side of it. I willingly listen to your own account. You never took, or at least never accepted, the Duchesse de ———'s jewels; and your friend M. de N. never sold them to one jeweller and obtained their substitutes in paste from another?"

The Vicomte made a perceptible effort to repress an impulse of rage; then reseating himself in his chair, and with that slight shrug of the shoulder by which a Frenchman implies to himself that rage would be out of place, replied calmly, "M. de N. did as you say, but, of course, not employed by me, nor with my knowledge. Listen; the truth is this—the time has come to tell it: Before you left Paris for Aix I found myself on the brink of ruin. I had glided towards it with my characteristic recklessness—with that scorn of money for itself, that sanguine confidence in the favour of fortune, which are vices common to every *roi des viveurs.* Poor mock Alexanders that we spendthrifts are in youth! we divide all we have among others, and when asked by some prudent friend 'What have you left for your own share?' answer 'Hope.' I knew, of course, that my patrimony was rapidly vanishing; but then my horses were matchless. I had enough to last me for years on their chance of winning—of course they would win. But you may recollect when we parted that I was troubled,—creditors' bills before me—usurers' bills too,—and you, my dear Louvier, pressed on me your purse; were angry when I refused it. How could I accept? All my chance of repayment was in the speed of a horse. I believed in that

chance for myself; but for a trustful friend, no. Ask your own heart now—nay, I will not say heart—ask your own common-sense, whether a man who then put aside your purse—spendthrift, *vaurien*, though he might be—was likely to steal or accept a woman's jewels—*Vas, mon pauvre Louvier*, again I say, '*Fors non mutat genus.*'"

Despite the repetition of the displeasing patrician motto such reminiscences of his visitor's motley character—irregular, turbulent, the reverse of severe, but, in its own loose way, grandly generous and grandly brave—struck both on the common-sense and the heart of the listener; and the Frenchman recognised the Frenchman. Louvier doubted De Mauléon's word no more, bowed his head, and said, "Victor de Mauléon, I have wronged you—go on."

"On the day after you left for Aix came that horse-race on which my all depended: it was lost. The loss absorbed the whole of my remaining fortune, it absorbed about 20,000 francs in excess, a debt of honour to De N., whom you called my friend: friend he was not; imitator, follower, flatterer, yes. Still I deemed him enough my friend to say to him, 'Give me a little time to pay the money; I must sell my stud, or write to my only living relation from whom I have expectations.' You remember that relation—Jacques de Mauléon, old and unmarried. By De N.'s advice I did write to my kinsman. No answer came; but what did come were fresh bills from creditors. I then calmly calculated my assets. The sale of my stud and effects *might* suffice to pay every *sou* that I owed, including my debt to De N.; but that was not quite certain—at all events, when the debts were paid I should be beggared. Well, you know, Louvier, what we Frenchmen are: how Nature has denied to us the quality of patience; how involuntarily suicide presents itself to us when hope is lost—and suicide seemed to me here due to honour—viz., to the certain discharge of my liabilities—for the stud and effects of Victor de Mauléon, *roi des viveurs*, would command much higher prices if he died like Cato than if he ran away from his fate like Pompey. Doubtless De N. guessed my intention from my words or my manner; but on the very day in which I had made all preparations for quitting the world from which sunshine had vanished, I received in a blank envelope bank-notes amounting to 70,000 francs, and

the post-mark on the envelope was that of the town of Fontainebleau, near to which lived my rich kinsman Jacques. I took it for granted that the sum came from him. Displeased as he might have been with my wild career, still I was his natural heir. The sum sufficed to pay my debt to De N., to all creditors, and leave a surplus. My sanguine spirits returned. I would sell my stud; I would retrench, reform, go to my kinsman as the penitent son. The fatted calf would be killed, and I should wear purple yet. You understand that, Louvier?"

"Yes, yes; so like you. Go on."

"Now, then, came the thunderbolt! Ah! in those sunny days you used to envy me for being so spoilt by women. The Duchesse de —— had conceived for me one of those romantic fancies which women without children, and with ample leisure for the waste of affection, do sometimes conceive for very ordinary men younger than themselves, but in whom they imagine they discover sinners to reform or heroes to exalt. I had been honoured by some notes from the Duchesse in which this sort of romance was owned. I had not replied to them encouragingly. In truth, my heart was then devoted to another,—the English girl whom I had wooed as my wife—who, despite her parents' retractation of their consent to our union when they learned how dilapidated were my fortunes, pledged herself to remain faithful to me, and wait for better days." Again De Mauléon paused in suppressed emotion, and then went on hurriedly: "No, the Duchesse did not inspire me with guilty passion, but she did inspire me with an affectionate respect. I felt that she was by nature meant to be a great and noble creature, and was, nevertheless, at that moment wholly misled from her right place amongst women by an illusion of mere imagination about a man who happened then to be very much talked about, and perhaps resembled some Lothario in the novels which she was always reading. We lodged, as you may remember, in the same house."

"Yes, I remember. I remember how you once took me to a great ball given by the Duchesse; how handsome I thought her, though no longer young; and you say right —how I did envy you, that night!"

"From that night, however, the Duc, not unnaturally, became jealous. He reproved the Duchesse for her too

amiable manner towards a *mauvais sujet* like myself, and forbade her in future to receive my visits. It was then that these notes became frequent and clandestine, brought to me by her maid, who took back my somewhat chilling replies.

"But to proceed. In the flush of my high spirits, and in the insolence of magnificent ease with which I paid De N. the trifle I owed him, something he said made my heart stand still. I told him that the money received had come from Jacques de Mauléon, and that I was going down to his house that day to thank him. He replied, 'Don't go; it did not come from him.' 'It must; see the post-mark of the envelope—Fontainebleau.' 'I posted it at Fontainebleau.' 'You sent me the money, you!' 'Nay, that is beyond my means. Where it came from,' said this *misérable*, 'much more may yet come;' and then he narrated, with that cynicism so in vogue at Paris, how he had told the Duchesse (who knew him as my intimate associate) of my stress of circumstance, of his fear that I meditated something desperate; how she gave him the jewels to sell and to substitute; how, in order to baffle my suspicion and frustrate my scruples, he had gone to Fontainebleau and there posted the envelope containing the bank-notes, out of which he secured for himself the payment he deemed otherwise imperilled. De N. having made this confession, hurried down the stairs swiftly enough to save himself a descent by the window. Do you believe me still?"

"Yes; you were always so hot-blooded, and De N. so considerate of self, I believe you implicitly."

"Of course I did what any man would do—I wrote a hasty letter to the Duchesse, stating all my gratitude for an act of pure friendship so noble; urging also the reasons that rendered it impossible for a man of honour to profit by such an act. Unhappily, what had been sent was paid away ere I knew the facts; but I could not bear the thought of life till my debt to her was acquitted; in short, Louvier, conceive for yourself the sort of letter which I—which any honest man—would write, under circumstances so cruel."

"H'm!" grunted Louvier.

"Something, however, in my letter, conjoined with what De N. had told her as to my state of mind, alarmed this

poor woman, who had deigned to take in me an interest so little deserved. Her reply, very agitated and incoherent, was brought to me by her maid, who had taken my letter, and by whom, as I before said, our correspondence had been of late carried on. In her reply she implored me to decide, to reflect on nothing till I had seen her; stated how the rest of her day was pre-engaged; and since to visit her openly had been made impossible by the Duc's interdict, enclosed the key to the private entrance to her rooms, by which I could gain an interview with her at ten o'clock that night, an hour at which the Duc had informed her he should be out till late at his club. Now, however great the indiscretion which the Duchesse here committed, it is due to her memory to say, that I am convinced that her dominant idea was that I meditated self-destruction; that no time was to be lost to save me from it; and for the rest she trusted to the influence which a woman's tears and adjurations and reasonings have over even the strongest and hardest men. It is only one of those coxcombs in whom the world of fashion abounds who could have admitted a thought that would have done wrong to the impulsive, generous, imprudent eagerness of a woman to be in time to save from death by his own hand a fellow-being for whom she had conceived an interest. I so construed her note. At the hour she named I admitted myself into the rooms by the key she sent. You know the rest: I was discovered by the Duc and by the agents of police in the cabinet in which the Duchesse's jewels were kept. The key that admitted me into the cabinet was found in my possession."

De Mauléon's voice here faltered, and he covered his face with a convulsive hand. Almost in the same breath he recovered from visible sign of emotion, and went on with a half-laugh.

"Ah! you envied me, did you, for being spoiled by the women? Enviable position indeed was mine that night. The Duc obeyed the first impulse of his wrath. He imagined that I had dishonoured him: he would dishonour me in return. Easier to his pride, too, a charge against the robber of jewels than against a favoured lover of his wife. But when I, obeying the first necessary obligation of honour, invented on the spur of the moment the story by which the

Duchesse's reputation was cleared from suspicion, accused myself of a frantic passion and the trickery of a fabricated key, the Duc's true nature of *gentilhomme* came back. He retracted the charge which he could scarcely even at the first blush have felt to be well founded; and as the sole charge left was simply that which men *comme il faut* do not refer to criminal courts and police investigations, I was left to make my bow unmolested and retreat to my own rooms, awaiting there such communications as the Duc might deem it right to convey to me on the morrow.

"But on the morrow the Duc, with his wife and personal suite, quitted Paris *en route* for Spain; the bulk of his retinue, including the offending abigail, was discharged; and, whether through these servants or through the police, the story before evening was in the mouth of every gossip in club or *café*—exaggerated, distorted, to my ignominy and shame. My detection in the cabinet, the sale of the jewels, the substitution of paste by De N., who was known to be my servile imitator, and reputed to be my abject tool; all my losses on the turf, my debts,—all these scattered fibres of flax were twisted together in a rope that would have hanged a dog with a much better name than mine. If some disbelieved that I could be a thief, few of those who should have known me best held me guiltless of a baseness almost equal to that of theft—the exaction of profit from the love of a foolish woman."

"But you could have told your own tale, shown the letters you had received from the Duchesse, and cleared away every stain on your honour."

"How?—shown her letters, ruined her character, even stated that she had caused her jewels to be sold for the uses of a young *roué!* Ah no, Louvier! I would rather have gone to the galleys."

"H'm!" grunted Louvier again.

"The Duc generously gave me better means of righting myself. Three days after he quitted Paris I received a letter from him, very politely written, expressing his great regret that any words implying the suspicion too monstrous and absurd to need refutation should have escaped him in the surprise of the moment; but stating that since the offence I had owned was one that he could not overlook, he was under the necessity of asking the only reparation I could

make. That if it 'deranged' me to quit Paris, he would return to it for the purpose required; but that if I would give him the additional satisfaction of suiting his convenience, he should prefer to await my arrival at Bayonne, where he was detained by the indisposition of the Duchesse."

"You have still that letter?" asked Louvier, quickly.

"Yes; with other more important documents constituting what I may call my *pièces justificatives*.

"I need not say that I replied stating the time at which I should arrive at Bayonne, and the hotel at which I should await the Duc's command. Accordingly I set out that same day, gained the hotel named, despatched to the Duc the announcement of my arrival, and was considering how I should obtain a second in some officer quartered in the town—for my soreness and resentment at the marked coldness of my former acquaintances at Paris had forbidden me to seek a second among any of that faithless number—when the Duc himself entered my room. Judge of my amaze at seeing him in person; judge how much greater the amaze became when he advanced with a grave but cordial smile, offering me his hand!

"'M. de Mauléon,' said he, 'since I wrote to you, facts have become known to me which would induce me rather to ask your friendship than call on you to defend your life. Madame la Duchesse has been seriously ill since we left Paris, and I refrained from all explanations likely to add to the hysterical excitement under which she was suffering. It is only this day that her mind became collected, and she herself then gave me her entire confidence. Monsieur, she insisted on my reading the letters that you addressed to her. Those letters, Monsieur, suffice to prove your innocence of any design against my peace. The Duchesse has so candidly avowed her own indiscretion, has so clearly established the distinction between indiscretion and guilt, that I have granted her my pardon with a lightened heart and a firm belief that we shall be happier together than we have been yet.'

"The Duc continued his journey the next day, but he subsequently honoured me with two or three letters written as friend to friend, and in which you will find repeated the substance of what I have stated him to say by word of mouth."

"But why not then have returned to Paris? Such letters, at least, you might have shown, and in braving your calumniators you would have soon lived them down."

"You forget that I was a ruined man. When, by the sale of my horses, &c., my debts, including what was owed to the Duchesse, and which I remitted to the Duc, were discharged, the balance left to me would not have maintained me a week at Paris. Besides, I felt so sore, so indignant. Paris and the Parisians had become to me so hateful. And to crown all, that girl, that English girl whom I had so loved, on whose fidelity I had so counted—well, I received a letter from her, gently but coldly bidding me farewell for ever. I do not think she believed me guilty of theft, but doubtless the offence I had confessed, in order to save the honour of the Duchesse, could but seem to her all-sufficient! Broken in spirit, bleeding at heart to the very core, still self-destruction was no longer to be thought of. I would not die till I could once more lift up my head as Victor de Mauléon."

"What then became of you, my poor Victor?"

"Ah! that is a tale too long for recital. I have played so many parts that I am puzzled to recognise my own identity with the Victor de Mauléon whose name I abandoned. I have been a soldier in Algeria, and won my cross on the field of battle—that cross and my colonel's letter are among my *pièces justificatives*. I have been a gold-digger in California, a speculator in New York, of late in callings obscure and humble. But in all my adventures, under whatever name, I have earned testimonials of probity, could manifestations of so vulgar a virtue be held of account by the enlightened people of Paris. I come now to a close. The Vicomte de Mauléon is about to re-appear in Paris, and the first to whom he announces that sublime avatar is Paul Louvier. When settled in some modest apartment, I shall place in your hands my *pièces justificatives*. I shall ask you to summon my surviving relations or connections, among which are the Counts de Vandemar, Beauvilliers, De Passy, and the Marquis de Rochebriant, with any friends of your own who sway the opinions of the Great World. You will place my justification before them, expressing your own opinion that it suffices;—in a word, you will give me the sanction of your countenance. For

the rest, I trust to myself to propitiate the kindly and to silence the calumnious. I have spoken; what say you?"

"You overrate my power in society. Why not appeal yourself to your high-born relations?"

"No, Louvier; I have too well considered the case to alter my decision. It is through you, and you alone, that I shall approach my relations. My vindicator must be a man of whom the vulgar cannot say, 'Oh, he is a relation—a fellow-noble: those aristocrats whitewash each other.' It must be an authority with the public at large—a *bourgeois*, a *millionnaire*, a *roi de la Bourse*. I choose you, and that ends the discussion."

Louvier could not help laughing good-humouredly at the *sang froid* of the Vicomte. He was once more under the domination of a man who had for a time dominated all with whom he lived.

De Mauléon continued: "Your task will be easy enough. Society changes rapidly at Paris. Few persons now exist who have more than a vague recollection of the circumstances which can be so easily explained to my complete vindication when the vindication comes from a man of your solid respectability and social influence. Besides, I have political objects in view. You are a Liberal; the Vandemars and Rochebriants are Legitimists. I prefer a godfather on the Liberal side. *Pardieu, mon ami*, why such coquettish hesitation? Said and done. Your hand on it."

"There is my hand then. I will do all I can to help you."

"I know you will, old friend; and you do both kindly and wisely." Here De Mauléon cordially pressed the hand he held, and departed.

On gaining the street, the Vicomte glided into a neighbouring courtyard, in which he had left his *fiacre*, and bade the coachman drive towards the Boulevard Sebastopol. On the way, he took from a small bag that he had left in the carriage the flaxen wig and pale whiskers which distinguished M. Lebeau, and mantled his elegant habiliments in an immense cloak, which he had also left in the *fiacre*. Arrived at the Boulevard Sebastopol, he drew up the collar of the cloak so as to conceal much of his face, stopped the driver, paid him quickly, and, bag in hand, hurried on to

another stand of *fiacres* at a little distance, entered one, drove to the Faubourg Montmartre, dismissed the vehicle at the mouth of a street not far from M. Lebeau's office, and gained on foot the private side door of the house, let himself in with his latch-key, entered the private room on the inner side of his office, locked the door, and proceeded leisurely to exchange the brilliant appearance which the Vicomte de Mauléon had borne on his visit to the *millionnaire*, for the sober raiment and *bourgeois* air of M. Lebeau, the letter-writer.

Then after locking up his former costume in a draw of his *secrétaire*, he sat himself down and wrote the following lines:—

"Dear M. Georges,—I advise you strongly, from information that has just reached me, to lose no time in pressing M. Savarin to repay the sum I recommended you to lend him, and for which you hold his bill due this day. The scandal of legal measures against a writer so distinguished should be avoided if possible. He will avoid it and get the money somehow. But he must be urgently pressed. If you neglect this warning, my responsibility is past.—*Agréez mes sentimens les plus sincères.* J. L."

CHAPTER II.

The Marquis de Rochebriant is no longer domiciled in an attic in the gloomy faubourg. See him now in a charming *appartement de garçon au premier* in the Rue du Helder, close by the promenades and haunts of the *mode*. It had been furnished and inhabited by a brilliant young provincial from Bordeaux, who coming into an inheritance of 100,000 francs, had rushed up to Paris to enjoy himself, and make his million at the Bourse. He *had* enjoyed himself thoroughly—he had been a darling of the *demi monde*. He had been a successful and an inconstant gallant. Zélie had listened to his vows of eternal love, and his offers of unlimited *cachemires*. Desirée, succeeding Zélie, had assigned to him her whole heart, or all that was left of it, in gratitude for the ardour of his passion, and the diamonds and *coupé* which accompanied and attested the ardour. The superb Hortense, supplanting Desirée, received his visits in the charming apartment he furnished for her, and entertained him and his friends at the most delicate little suppers, for the moderate sum of 4000 francs a-month. Yes, he had enjoyed himself thoroughly, but he had not made a million at the Bourse. Before the year was out, the 100,000 francs were gone. Compelled to return to his province, and by his hard-hearted relations ordained, on penalty of starvation, to marry the daughter of an *avoué*, for the sake of her *dot* and a share in the hated drudgery of the *avoué's* business,—his apartment was to be had for a tenth part of the original cost of its furniture. A certain Chevalier de Finisterre, to whom Louvier had introduced the Marquis as a useful fellow who knew Paris, and would save him from being cheated, had secured this *bijou* of an apartment for Alain, and concluded the bargain for the *bagatelle* of £500. The Chevalier took the same advantageous occasion to purchase the English well-bred hack, and the neat *coupé* and horses which the Bordelais was also necessitated to dispose of. These purchases made, the Marquis

had some 5000 francs (£200) left out of Louvier's premium of £1000. The Marquis, however, did not seem alarmed or dejected by the sudden diminution of capital so expeditiously effected. The easy life thus commenced seemed to him too natural to be fraught with danger; and easy though it was, it was a very simple and modest sort of life compared with that of many other men of his age to whom Enguerrand had introduced him, though most of them had an income less than his, and few, indeed, of them were his equals in dignity of birth. Could a Marquis de Rochebriant, if he lived at Paris at all, give less than 3000 francs a-year for his apartment, or mount a more humble establishment than that confined to a valet and a tiger, two horses for his *coupé* and one for the saddle? "Impossible," said the Chevalier de Finisterre, decidedly; and the Marquis bowed to so high an authority. He thought within himself, "If I find in a few months that I am exceeding my means, I can but dispose of my rooms and my horses, and return to Rochebriant a richer man by far than I left it."

To say truth, the brilliant seductions of Paris had already produced their effect, not only on the habits, but on the character and cast of thought, which the young noble had brought with him from the feudal and melancholy Bretagne.

Warmed by the kindness with which, once introduced by his popular kinsmen, he was everywhere received, the reserve or shyness which is the compromise between the haughtiness of self-esteem and the painful doubt of appreciation by others, rapidly melted away. He caught insensibly the polished tone, at once so light and so cordial, of his new-made friends. With all the efforts of the democrats to establish equality and fraternity, it is among the aristocrats that equality and fraternity are most to be found. All *gentilshommes* in the best society are equals; and whether they embrace or fight each other, they embrace or fight as brothers of the same family. But with the tone of manners, Alain de Rochebriant imbibed still more insensibly the lore of that philosophy which young idlers in pursuit of pleasure teach to each other. Probably in all civilised and luxurious capitals that philosophy is very much the same among the same class of idlers at the same age; probably it flourishes in Pekin not less than at Paris.

If Paris has the credit, or discredit, of it more than any other capital, it is because in Paris more than in any other capital it charms the eye by grace and amuses the ear by wit. A philosophy which takes the things of this life very easily—which has a smile and a shrug of the shoulders for any pretender to the Heroic—which subdivides the wealth of passion into the pocket-money of caprices—is always in or out of love, ankle-deep, never venturing a plunge—which, light of heart as of tongue, turns "the solemn plausibilities" of earth into subjects for epigrams and *bons mots*, —it jests at loyalty to kings, and turns up its nose at enthusiasm for commonwealths—it abjures all grave studies —it shuns all profound emotions. We have crowds of such philosophers in London; but there they are less noticed, because the agreeable attributes of the sect are there dimmed and obfuscated. It is not a philosophy that flowers richly in the reek of fogs, and in the teeth of east winds; it wants for full development the light atmosphere of Paris. Now this philosophy began rapidly to exercise its charms upon Alain de Rochebriant. Even in the society of professed Legitimists, he felt that faith had deserted the Legitimist creed or taken refuge only as a companion of religion in the hearts of high-born women and a small minority of priests. His chivalrous loyalty still struggled to keep its ground, but its roots were very much loosened. He saw—for his natural intellect was keen—that the cause of the Bourbon was hopeless, at least for the present, because it had ceased, at least for the present, to *be a cause*. His political creed thus shaken, with it was shaken also that adherence to the past which had stifled his ambition of a future. That ambition began to breathe and to stir, though he owned it not to others—though, as yet, he scarce distinguished its whispers, much less directed its movements towards any definite object. Meanwhile, all that he knew of his ambition was the new-born desire for social success.

We see him, then, under the quick operation of this change in sentiments and habits, reclined on the *fauteuil* before his fireside, and listening to his college friend, of whom we have so long lost sight Frederic Lemercier. Frederic had breakfasted with Alain—a breakfast such as might have contented the author of the *Almanach des*

Gourmands, and provided from the *Café Anglais*. Frederic has just thrown aside his regalia.

"*Pardieu!* my dear Alain. If Louvier has no sinister object in the generosity of his dealings with you, he will have raised himself prodigiously in my estimation. I shall forsake, in his favour, my allegiance to Duplessis, though that clever fellow has just made a wondrous *coup* in the Egyptians, and I gain 40,000 francs by having followed his advice. But if Duplessis has a head as long as Louvier's, he certainly has not an equal greatness of soul. Still, my dear friend, will you pardon me if I speak frankly, and in the way of a warning homily?"

"Speak; you cannot oblige me more."

"Well, then, I know that you can no more live at Paris in the way you are doing, or mean to do, without some fresh addition to your income, than a lion could live in the Jardin des Plantes upon an allowance of two mice a-week."

"I don't see that. Deducting what I pay to my aunt—and I cannot get her to take more than 6000 francs a-year—I have 700 napoleons left, net and clear. My rooms and stables are equipped, and I have 2500 francs in hand. On 700 napoleons a-year, I calculate that I can very easily live as I do; and if I fail—well, I must return to Rochebriant. Seven hundred napoleons a-year will be a magnificent rental there."

Frederic shook his head.

"You do not know how one expense leads to another. Above all, you do not calculate the chief part of one's expenditure—the unforeseen. You will play at the Jockey Club and lose half your income in a night."

"I shall never touch a card."

"So you say now, innocent as a lamb of the force of example. At all events, *beau seigneur*, I presume you are not going to resuscitate the part of the *Ermite de la Chaussée d'Antin*; and the fair *Parisiennes* are demons of extravagance."

"Demons whom I shall not court."

"Did I say you would? They will court you. Before another month has flown you will be inundated with *billets-doux*."

"It is not a shower that will devastate my humble harvest. But, *mon cher*, we are falling upon very gloomy

topics. *Laissez-moi tranquille* in my illusions, if illusions they be. Ah, you cannot conceive what a new life opens to the man who, like myself, has passed the dawn of his youth in privation and fear, when he suddenly acquires competence and hope. If it lasts only a year, it will be something to say 'Vixi.'"

"Alain," said Frederic, very earnestly, "believe me, I should not have assumed the ungracious and inappropriate task of Mentor, if it were only a year's experience at stake, or if you were in the position of men like myself—free from the encumbrance of a great name and heavily mortgaged lands. Should you fail to pay regularly the interest due to Louvier, he has the power to put up at public auction, and there to buy in for himself, your *château* and domain."

"I am aware that in strict law he would have such power, though I doubt if he would use it. Louvier is certainly a much better and more generous fellow than I could have expected; and if I believe De Finisterre, he has taken a sincere liking to me, on account of affection to my poor father. But why should not the interest be paid regularly? The revenues from Rochebriant are not likely to decrease, and the charge on them is lightened by the contract with Louvier. And I will confide to you a hope I entertain of a very large addition to my rental."

"How?"

"A chief part of my rental is derived from forests, and De Finisterre has heard of a capitalist who is disposed to make a contract for their sale at the fall this year, and may probably extend it to future years, at a price far exceeding that which I have hitherto obtained."

"Pray be cautious. De Finisterre is not a man I should implicitly trust in such matters."

"Why? do you know anything against him? He is in the best society—perfect *gentilhomme*—and, as his name may tell you, a fellow-Breton. You yourself allow, and so does Enguerrand, that the purchases he made for me—in this apartment, my horses, &c.—are singularly advantageous."

"Quite true; the Chevalier is reputed sharp and clever, is said to be very amusing, and a first-rate *piquet*-player. I don't know him personally. I am not in his set. I have

no valid reason to disparage his character, nor do I conjecture any motive he could have to injure or mislead you. Still, I say, be cautious how far you trust to his advice or recommendation,"

"Again I ask why?"

"He is unlucky to his friends. He attaches himself much to men younger than himself; and somehow or other I have observed that most of them have come to grief. Besides, a person in whose sagacity I have great confidence warned me against making the Chevalier's acquaintance, and said to me, in his blunt way, 'De Finisterre came to Paris with nothing; he has succeeded to nothing; he belongs to no ostensible profession by which anything can be made. But evidently now he has picked up a good deal; and in proportion as any young associate of his becomes poorer, De Finisterre seems mysteriously to become richer. Shun that sort of acquaintance.'"

"Who is your sagacious adviser?"

"Duplessis."

"Ah, I thought so. That bird of prey fancies every other bird looking out for pigeons. I fancy that Duplessis is, like all those money-getters, a seeker after fashion, and De Finisterre has not returned his bow."

"My dear Alain, I am to blame; nothing is so irritating as a dispute about the worth of the men we like. I began it, now let it be dropped; only make me one promise, that if you should be in arrear, or if need presses, you will come at once to me. It was very well to be absurdly proud in an attic, but that pride will be out of place in your *appartement au premier*."

"You are the best fellow in the world, Frederick, and I make you the promise you ask," said Alain, cheerfully, but yet with a secret emotion of tenderness and gratitude. "And now, *mon cher*, what day will you dine with me to meet Raoul and Enguerrand, and some others whom you would like to know?"

"Thanks, and hearty ones, but we move now in different spheres, and I shall not trespass on yours. *Je suis trop bourgeois* to incur the ridicule of *le bourgeois gentilhomme*."

"Frederic, how dare you speak thus? My dear fellow, my friends shall honour you as I do."

"But that will be on your account, not mine. No;

honestly, that kind of society neither tempts nor suits me. I am a sort of king in my own walk; and I prefer my Bohemian royalty to vassalage in higher regions. Say no more of it. It will flatter my vanity enough if you will now and then descend to my coteries, and allow me to parade a Rochebriant as my familiar crony, slap him on the shoulder, and call him Alain."

"Fie you who stopped me and the English aristocrat in the Champs Elysées, to humble us with your boast of having facinated *une grande dame*—I think you said a *duchesse*."

"Oh," said Lemercier, conceitedly, and passing his hand through his scented locks, "women are different; love levels all ranks. I don't blame Ruy Blas for accepting the love of a queen, but I do blame him for passing himself off as a noble—a plagiarism, by the by, from an English play. I do not love the English enough to copy them. *A propos*, what has become of *ce beau* Grarm Varn? I have not seen him of late."

"Neither have I."

"Nor the *belle Italienne?*"

"Nor her," said Alain, slightly blushing.

At this moment Enguerrand lounged into the room. Alain stopped Lemercier to introduce him to his kinsman. "Enguerrand, I present to you M. Lemercier, my earliest and one of my dearest friends."

The young noble held out his hand with the bright and joyous grace which accompanied all his movements, and expressed in cordial words his delight to make M. Lemercier's acquaintance. Bold and assured as Frederic was in his own circles, he was more discomposed than set at ease by the gracious accost of a *lion*, whom he felt at once to be of a breed superior to his own. He muttered some confused phrases, in which *ravi* and *flatté* were alone audible, and evanished.

"I know M. Lemercier by sight very well," said Enguerrand, seating himself. "One sees him very often in the Bois; and I have met him in the *Coulisses* and the *Bal Mabille*. I think, too, that he plays at the Bourse, and is *lié* with M. Duplessis, who bids fair to rival Louvier one of these days. Is Duplessis also one of your dearest friends?"

"No, indeed. I once met him, and was not prepossessed in his favour."

"Nevertheless, he is a man much to be admired and respected."

"Why so?"

"Because he understands so well the art of making what we all covet—money. I will introduce you to him."

"I have been already introduced."

"Then I will re-introduce you. He is much courted in a society which I have recently been permitted by my father to frequent—the society of the Imperial Court."

"You frequent that society, and the Count permits it?"

"Yes; better the Imperialists than the Republicans; and my father begins to own that truth, though he is too old or too indolent to act on it."

"And Raoul?"

"Oh, Raoul, the melancholy and philosophical Raoul, has no ambition of any kind, so long as—thanks somewhat to me—his purse is always replenished for the wants of his stately existence, among the foremost of which wants are the means to supply the wants of others: That is the true reason why he consents to our glove-shop. Raoul belongs, with some other young men of the faubourg, to a society enrolled under the name of Saint François de Sales, for the relief of the poor. He visits their houses, and is at home by their sick-beds as at their stinted boards. Nor does he confine his visitations to the limits of our faubourg; he extends his travels to Montmartre and Belleville. As to our upper world, he does not concern himself much with its changes. He says that 'we have destroyed too much ever to rebuild solidly; and that whatever we do build could be upset any day by a Paris mob, which he declares to be the only institution we have left.' A wonderful fellow is Raoul; full of mind, though he does little with it; full of heart, which he devotes to suffering humanity, and to a poetic, knightly reverence (not to be confounded with earthly love, and not to be degraded into that sickly sentiment called Platonic affection) for the Comtesse di Rimini, who is six years older than himself, and who is very faithfully attached to her husband, Raoul's intimate friend, whose honour he would guard as his own. It is an episode in the drama of Parisian life, and one not so

uncommon as the malignant may suppose. Di Rimini knows and approves of his veneration; my mother, the best of women, sanctions it, and deems truly that it preserves Raoul safe from all the temptations to which ignobler youth is exposed. I mention this lest you should imagine there was anything in Raoul's worship of his star less pure than it is. For the rest, Raoul, to the grief and amazement of that disciple of Voltaire, my respected father, is one of the very few men I know in our circles who is sincerely religious—an orthodox Catholic—and the only man I know who practises the religion he professes; charitable, chaste, benevolent; and no bigot, no intolerant ascetic. His only weakness is his entire submission to the worldly common-sense of his good-for-nothing, covetous, ambitious brother Enguerrand. I cannot say how I love him for that. If he had not such a weakness, his excellence would gall me, and I believe I should hate him."

Alain bowed his head at this eulogium. Such had been the character that, a few months ago, he would have sought as example and model. He seemed to gaze upon a flattered portrait of himself as he had been.

"But," said Enguerrand, "I have not come here to indulge in the overflow of brotherly affection. I come to take you to your relation the Duchess of Tarascon. I have pledged myself to her to bring you, and she is at home on purpose to receive you."

"In that case I cannot be such a churl as to refuse. And, indeed, I no longer feel quite the same prejudices against her and the Imperialists as I brought from Bretagne. Shall I order my carriage?"

"No; mine is at the door. Yours can meet you where you will, later. *Allons.*"

CHAPTER III.

The Duchesse de Tarascon occupied a vast apartment in the Rue Royale, close to the Tuileries. She held a high post among the ladies who graced the brilliant Court of the Empress. She had survived her second husband the Duc, who left no issue, and the title died with him. Alain and Enguerrand were ushered up the grand staircase, lined with tiers of costly exotics as if for a *fête;* but in that and in all kinds of female luxury, the Duchesse lived in a state of *fête perpétuelle.* The doors on the landing-place were screened by heavy *portières* of Genoa velvet, richly embroidered in gold with the ducal crown and cipher. The two *salons* through which the visitors passed to the private cabinet or boudoir were decorated with Gobelin tapestries, fresh, with a mixture of roseate hues, and depicting incidents in the career of the first Emperor; while the effigies of the late Duc's father—the gallant founder of a short-lived race—figured modestly in the background. On a table of Russian malachite within the recess of the central window lay, preserved in glass cases, the baton and the sword, the epaulettes, and the decorations of the brave Marshall. On the *consoles* and the mantelpieces stood clocks and vases of Sèvres that could scarcely be eclipsed by those in the Imperial palaces. Entering the cabinet, they found the Duchesse seated at her writing-table, with a small Skye terrier, hideous in the beauty of the purest breed, nestled at her feet. This room was an exquisite combination of costliness and comfort—Luxury at home. The hangings were of geranium-coloured silk, with double curtains of white satin; near to the writing-table a conservatory, with a white marble fountain at play in the centre, and a trellised aviary at the back. The walls were covered with small pictures—chiefly portraits and miniatures of the members of the Imperial family, of the late Duc, of his father the Marshal and Madame la Maréchale, of the present

Duchesse herself, and of some of the principal ladies of the Court.

The Duchesse was still in the prime of life. She had passed her fortieth year, but was so well "conserved" that you might have guessed her to be ten years younger. She was tall; not large—but with rounded figure inclined to *en bon point;* with dark hair and eyes, but fair complexion, injured in effect rather than improved by pearl-powder, and that atrocious barbarism of a dark stain on the eye-lids which has of late years been a baneful fashion; dressed—I am a man, and cannot describe her dress—all I know is, that she had the acknowledged fame of the best-dressed *subject* of France. As she rose from her seat there was in her look and air the unmistakable evidence of *grande dame;* a family likeness in feature to Alain himself, a stronger likeness to the picture of her first cousin—his mother—which was preserved at Rochebriant. Her descent was indeed from ancient and noble houses. But to the distinction of race she added that of fashion; crowning both with a tranquil consciousness of lofty position and unblemished reputation.

"Unnatural cousin," she said to Alain, offering her hand to him, with a gracious smile; "all this age in Paris, and I see you for the first time. But there is joy on earth as in heaven over sinners who truly repent. You repent truly—*n'est ce pas?*"

It is impossible to describe the caressing charm which the Duchesse threw into her words, voice, and look. Alain was fascinated and subdued.

"Ah, Madame la Duchesse," said he, bowing over the fair hand he lightly held, "it was not sin, unless modesty be a sin, which made a rustic hesitate long before he dared to offer his homage to the queen of the graces."

"Not badly said for a rustic," cried Enguerrand; "eh, Madame?"

"My cousin, you are pardoned," said the Duchesse. "Compliment is the perfume of *gentilhommerie;* and if you brought enough of that perfume from the flowers of Rochebriant to distribute among the ladies at Court, you will be terribly the *mode* there. Seducer!"—here she gave the Marquis a playful tap on the cheek, not in a coquettish but in a mother-like familiarity, and looking at

him attentively, said: "Why, you are even handsomer than your father. I shall be proud to present to their Imperial Majesties so becoming a cousin. But seat yourselves here, Messieurs, close to my arm chair, *causons*."

The Duchesse then took up the ball of the conversation. She talked without any apparent artifice, but with admirable tact; put just the questions about Rochebriant most calculated to please Alain, shunning all that might have pained him; asking him for descriptions of the surrounding scenery—the Breton legends; hoping that the old castle would never be spoiled by modernising restorations; inquiring tenderly after his aunt, whom she had in her childhood once seen, and still remembered with her sweet, grave face; paused little for replies; then turned to Enguerrand with sprightly small-talk on the topics of the day, and every now and then bringing Alain into the pale of the talk, leading on insensibly until she got Enguerrand himself to introduce the subject of the Emperor, and the political troubles which were darkening a reign heretofore so prosperous and splendid.

Her countenance then changed; it became serious, and even grave in its expression.

"It is true," she said, "that the times grow menacing—menacing not only to the throne, but to order and property and France. One by one they are removing all the breakwaters which the Empire had constructed between the executive and the most fickle and impulsive population that ever shouted 'long live' one day to the man whom they would send to the guillotine the next. They are denouncing what they call personal government; grant that it has its evils; but what would they substitute?—a constitutional monarchy like the English? That is impossible with universal suffrage and without an hereditary chamber. The nearest approach to it was the monarchy of Louis Philippe—we know how sick they became of that. A republic? *mon Dieu!* composed of republicans terrified out of their wits at each other. The moderate men, mimics of the Girondins, with the Reds, and the Socialists, and the Communists, ready to tear them to pieces. And then—what then?—the commercialists, the agriculturists, the middle class combining to elect some dictator who will cannonade the mob, and become a mimic Napoléon, grafted on a mimic

Necker or a mimic Danton. Oh, Messieurs, I am French to the core! You inheritors of such names must be as French as I am; and yet you men insist on remaining more useless to France in the midst of her need than I am,—I, a woman who can but talk and weep."

The Duchesse spoke with a warmth of emotion which startled and profoundly affected Alain. He remained silent, leaving it to Enguerrand to answer.

"Dear Madame," said the latter, "I do not see how either myself or our kinsman can merit your reproach. We are not legislators. I doubt if there is a single department in France that would elect us, if we offered ourselves. It is not our fault if the various floods of revolution leave men of our birth and opinions stranded wrecks of a perished world. The Emperor chooses his own advisers, and if they are bad ones, his Majesty certainly will not ask Alain and me to replace them."

"You do not answer—you evade me," said the Duchesse, with a mournful smile. "You are too skilled a man of the world, M. Enguerrand, not to know that it is not only legislators and ministers that are necessary to the support of a throne, and the safeguard of a nation. Do you not see how great a help it is to both throne and nation, when that section of public opinion which is represented by names illustrious in history, identified with records of chivalrous deeds and loyal devotion, rallies round the order established? Let that section of public opinion stand aloof, soured and discontented, excluded from active life, lending no counterbalance to the perilous oscillations of democratic passion, and tell me if it is not an enemy to itself as well as a traitor to the principles it embodies?"

"The principles it embodies, Madame," said Alain, "are those of fidelity to a race of kings unjustly set aside, less for the vices than the virtues of ancestors. Louis XV. was the worst of the Bourbons,—he was the *bien aimé*,—he escapes; Louis XVI. was in moral attributes the best of the Bourbons,—he dies the death of a felon; Louis XVIII., against whom much may be said, restored to the throne by foreign bayonets, reigning as a disciple of Voltaire might reign, secretly scoffing alike at the royalty and the religion which were crowned in his person, dies peacefully in his bed; Charles X., redeeming the errors of his youth by a

reign untarnished by a vice, by a religion earnest and sincere, is sent into exile for defending established order from the very inroads which you lament. He leaves an heir against whom calumny cannot invent a tale, and that heir remains an outlaw simply because he descends from Henry IV., and has a right to reign. Madame, you appeal to us as among the representatives of the chivalrous deeds and loyal devotion which characterised the old nobility of France. Should we deserve that character if we forsook the unfortunate, and gained wealth and honour in forsaking?"

"Your words endear you to me. I am proud to call you cousin," said the Duchesse. "But do you, or does any man in his senses believe that if you upset the Empire you could get back the Bourbons? that you would not be in imminent danger of a Government infinitely more opposed to the theories on which rests the creed of Legitimists than that of Louis Napoléon? After all, what is there in the loyalty of you Bourbonites that has in it the solid worth of an argument which can appeal to the comprehension of mankind, except it be the principle of a hereditary monarchy? Nobody now-a-days can maintain the right divine of a single regal family to impose itself upon a nation. That dogma has ceased to be a living principle; it is only a dead reminiscence. But the institution of monarchy is a principle strong and vital, and appealing to the practical interests of vast sections of society. Would you sacrifice the principle which concerns the welfare of millions, because you cannot embody it in the person of an individual utterly insignificant in himself? In a word, if you prefer monarchy to the hazard of republicanism for such a country as France, accept the monarchy you find, since it is quite clear you cannot rebuild the monarchy you would prefer. Does it not embrace all the great objects for which you call yourself Legitimist? Under it religion is honoured, a national Church secured, in reality if not in name; under it you have united the votes of millions to the establishment of the throne; under it all the material interests of the country, commercial, agricultural, have advanced with an unequalled rapidity of progress; under it Paris has become the wonder of the world for riches, for splendour, for grace and beauty; under it the old traditional enemies of France have been

humbled and rendered impotent. The policy of Richelieu has been achieved in the abasement of Austria; the policy of Napoléon I. has been consummated in the salvation of Europe from the semi-barbarous ambition of Russia. England no longer casts her trident in the opposite scale of the balance of European power. Satisfied with the honour of our alliance, she has lost every other ally; and her forces neglected, her spirit enervated, her statesmen dreaming believers in the safety of their island, provided they withdraw from the affairs of Europe, may sometimes scold us, but will certainly not dare to fight. With France she is but an inferior satellite,—without France she is—nothing. Add to all this a Court more brilliant than that of Louis XIV., a sovereign not indeed without faults and errors, but singularly mild in his nature, warm-hearted to friends, forgiving to foes, whom personally no one could familiarly know and not be charmed with a *bonté* of character, lovable as that of Henri IV.,—and tell me what more than all this could you expect from the reign of a Bourbon?"

"With such results," said Alain, "from the monarchy you so eloquently praise, I fail to discover what the Emperor's throne could possibly gain by a few powerless converts from an unpopular, and you say, no doubt truly, from a hopeless cause."

"I say monarchy gains much by the loyal adhesion of any man of courage, ability, and honour. Every new monarchy gains much by conversions from the ranks by which the older monarchies were strengthened and adorned. But I do not here invoke your aid merely to this monarchy, my cousin; I demand your devotion to the interests of France; I demand that you should not rest an outlaw from her service. Ah, you think that France is in no danger—that you may desert or oppose the Empire as you list, and that society will remain safe! You are mistaken. Ask Enguerrand."

"Madame," said Enguerrand, "you overrate my political knowledge in that appeal; but, honestly speaking, I subscribe to your reasonings. I agree with you that the Empire sorely needs the support of men of honour; it has one cause of rot which now undermines it—dishonest jobbery in its administrative departments; even in that of the army, which apparently is so heeded and cared for. I agree with

you that France is in danger, and may need the swords of all her better sons, whether against the foreigner or against her worst enemies—the mobs of her great towns. I myself received a military education, and but for my reluctance to separate myself from my father and Raoul, I should be a candidate for employments more congenial to me than those of the Bourse and my trade in the glove-shop. But Alain is happily free from all family ties, and Alain knows that my advice to him is not hostile to your exhortations."

"I am glad to think he is under so salutary an influence," said the Duchesse; and seeing that Alain remained silent and thoughtful, she wisely changed the subject, and shortly afterwards the two friends took leave.

CHAPTER IV.

THREE days elapsed before Graham again saw M. Lebeau. The letter-writer did not show himself at the *café*, and was not to be found at his office, the ordinary business of which was transacted by his clerk, saying that his master was much engaged on important matters that took him from home.

Graham naturally thought that these matters concerned the discovery of Louise Duval, and was reconciled to suspense. At the *café*, awaiting Lebeau, he had slid into some acquaintance with the *ouvrier* Armand Monnier, whose face and talk had before excited his interest. Indeed, the acquaintance had been commenced by the *ouvrier*, who seated himself at a table near to Graham's, and, after looking at him earnestly for some minutes, said, "You are waiting for your antagonist at dominoes, M. Lebeau—a very remarkable man."

"So he seems. I know, however, but little of him. You, perhaps, have known him longer?"

"Several months. Many of your countrymen frequent this *café*, but you do not seem to care to associate with the *blouses*."

"It is not that; but we islanders are shy, and don't make acquaintance with each other readily. By the way, since you so courteously accost me, I may take the liberty of saying that I overheard you defend the other night, against one of my countrymen, who seemed to me to talk great nonsense, the existence of *le bon Dieu*. You had much the best of it. I rather gathered from your argument that you went somewhat farther, and were not too enlightened to admit of Christianity."

Armand Monnier looked pleased—he liked praise; and he liked to hear himself talk, and he plunged at once into a very complicated sort of Christianity—partly Arian,

partly St. Simonian, with a little of Rousseau and a great deal of Armand Monnier. Into this we need not follow him; but, in sum, it was a sort of Christianity, the main heads of which consisted in the removal of your neighbour's landmarks—in the right of the poor to appropriate the property of the rich—in the right of love to dispense with marriage, and the duty of the State to provide for any children that might result from such union, the parents being incapacitated to do so, as whatever they might leave was due to the treasury in common. Graham listened to these doctrines with melancholy not unmixed with contempt. "Are these opinions of yours," he asked, "derived from reading or your own reflection?"

"Well, from both, but from circumstances in life that induced me to read and reflect. I am one of the many victims of the tyrannical law of marriage. When very young I married a woman who made me miserable, and then forsook me. Morally, she has ceased to be my wife—legally, she is. I then met with another woman who suits me, who loves me. She lives with me; I cannot marry her; she has to submit to humiliations, to be called contemptuously an *ouvrier's* mistress. Then, though before I was only a Republican, I felt there was something wrong in society which needed a greater change than that of a merely political government; and then, too, when I was all troubled and sore, I chanced to read one of Madame de Grantmesnil's books. A glorious genius that woman's!"

"She has genius, certainly," said Graham, with a keen pang at his heart; Madame de Grantmesnil, the dearest friend of Isaura! "But," he added, "though I believe that eloquent author has indirectly assailed certain social institutions, including that of marriage, I am perfectly persuaded that she never designed to effect such complete overthrow of the system which all civilised communities have hitherto held in reverence, as your doctrines would attempt; and after all, she but expresses her ideas through the medium of fabulous incidents and characters. And men of your sense should not look for a creed in the fictions of poets and romance-writers."

"Ah," said Monnier, "I dare say neither Madame de Grantmesnil nor even Rousseau ever even guessed the ideas they awoke in their readers; but one idea leads on to

another. And genuine poetry and romance touch the heart so much more than dry treatises. In a word, Madame de Grantmesnil's book set me thinking; and then I read other books, and talked with clever men, and educated myself. And so I became the man I am." Here, with a self-satisfied air, Monnier bowed to the Englishman, and joined a group at the other end of the room.

The next evening, just before dusk, Graham Vane was seated musingly in his own apartment in the Faubourg Montmartre, when there came a slight knock at his door. He was so wrapt in thought that he did not hear the sound, though twice repeated. The door opened gently, and M. Lebeau appeared on the threshold. The room was lighted only by the gas-lamp from the street without.

Lebeau advanced through the gloom, and quietly seated himself in the corner of the fire-place opposite to Graham before he spoke. "A thousand pardons for disturbing your slumbers, M. Lamb."

Startled then by the voice so near him, Graham raised his head, looked round, and beheld very indistinctly the person seated so near him.

"M. Lebeau?"

"At your service. I promised to give an answer to your question: accept my apologies that it has been deferred so long. I shall not this evening go to our *café;* I took the liberty of calling——"

"M. Lebeau, you are a brick."

"A what, Monsieur!—a *brique?*"

"I forgot—you are not up to our fashionable London idioms. A brick means a jolly fellow, and it is very kind in you to call. What is your decision?"

"Monsieur, I can give you some information, but it is so slight that I offer it gratis, and forego all thought of undertaking farther inquiries. They could only be prosecuted in another country, and it would not be worth my while to leave Paris on the chance of gaining so trifling a reward as you propose. Judge for yourself. In the year 1849, and in the month of July, Louise Duval left Paris for Aix-la-Chapelle. There she remained some weeks, and then left it I can learn no farther traces of her movements."

"Aix-la-Chapelle!—what could she do there?"

"It is a Spa in great request; crowded during the

summer season with visitors from all countries. She might have gone there for health or for pleasure."

"Do you think that one could learn more at the Spa itself if one went there?"

"Possibly. But it is so long—twenty years ago."

"She might have revisited the place."

"Certainly; but I know no more."

"Was she there under the same name—Duval?"

"I am sure of that."

"Do you think she left it alone or with others? You tell me she was awfully *belle*—she might have attracted admirers."

"If," answered Lebeau, reluctantly, "I could believe the report of my informant, Louise Duval left Aix not alone, but with some gallant—not an Englishman. They are said to have parted soon, and the man is now dead. But, speaking frankly, I do not think Mademoiselle Duval would have thus compromised her honour and sacrificed her future. I believe she would have scorned all proposals that were not those of marriage. But, all I can say for certainty is, that nothing is known to me of her fate since she quitted Aix-la-Chapelle."

"In 1849—she had then a child living?"

"A child? I never heard that she had any child; and I do not believe she could have had any child in 1849."

Graham mused. Somewhat less than five years after 1849 Louise Duval had been seen at Aix-la-Chapelle. Possibly she found some attraction at that place, and might yet be discovered there, "Monsieur Lebeau," said Graham, "you know this lady by sight; you would recognise her in spite of the lapse of years. Will you go to Aix and find out there what you can? Of course, expenses will be paid, and the reward will be given if you succeed."

"I cannot oblige you. My interest in this poor lady is not very strong, though I should be willing to serve her, and glad to know that she were alive. I have now business on hand which interests me much more, and which will take me from Paris, but not in the direction of Aix."

"If I wrote to my employer, and got him to raise the reward to some higher amount, that might make it worth your while?"

"I should still answer that my affairs will not permit

such a journey. But if there be any chance of tracing Louise Duval at Aix—and there may be—you would succeed quite as well as I should. You must judge for yourself if it be worth your trouble to attempt such a task; and if you do attempt it, and do succeed, pray let me know. A line to my office will reach me for some little time, even if I am absent from Paris. Adieu, M. Lamb."

Here M. Lebeau rose and departed.

Graham relapsed into thought; but a train of thought much more active, much more concentred than before. "No,"—thus ran his meditations; "no, it would not be safe to employ that man further. The reasons that forbid me to offer any very high reward for the discovery of this woman operate still more strongly against tendering to her own relation a sum that might indeed secure his aid, but would unquestionably arouse his suspicions, and perhaps drag into light all that must be concealed. Oh this cruel mission! I am, indeed, an impostor to myself till it be fulfilled. I will go to Aix, and take Renard with me. I am impatient till I set out, but I cannot quit Paris without once more seeing Isaura. She consents to relinquish the stage; surely I could wean her too from intimate friendship with a woman whose genius has so fatal an effect upon enthusiastic minds. And then—and then?"

He fell into a delightful reverie; and contemplating Isaura as his future wife, he surrounded her sweet image with all those attributes of dignity and respect with which an Englishman is accustomed to invest the destined bearer of his name, the gentle sovereign of his household, the sacred mother of his children. In this picture the more brilliant qualities of Isaura found, perhaps, but faint presentation. Her glow of sentiment, her play of fancy, her artistic yearnings for truths remote, for the invisible fairyland of beautiful romance, receded into the background of the picture. It was all these, no doubt, that had so strengthened and enriched the love at first sight, which had shaken the equilibrium of his positive existence; and yet he now viewed all these as subordinate to the one image of mild decorous matronage into which wedlock was to transform the child of genius, longing for angel wings and unlimited space.

CHAPTER V.

On quitting the sorry apartment of the false M. Lamb, Lebeau walked on with slow steps and bended head, like a man absorbed in thought. He threaded a labyrinth of obscure streets, no longer in the Faubourg Montmartre, and dived at last into one of the few courts which preserve the *cachet* of the *moyen âge* untouched by the ruthless spirit of improvement which, during the Second Empire, has so altered the face of Paris. At the bottom of the court stood a large house, much dilapidated, but bearing the trace of former grandeur in pilasters and fretwork in the style of the *Renaissance*, and a defaced coat of arms, surmounted with a ducal coronet, over the doorway. The house had the aspect of desertion: many of the windows were broken; others were jealously closed with mouldering shutters. The door stood ajar; Lebeau pushed it open, and the action set in movement a bell within a porter's lodge. The house, then, was not uninhabited; it retained the dignity of a *concierge*. A man with a large grizzled beard cut square, and holding a journal in his hand, emerged from the lodge, and moved his cap with a certain bluff and surly reverence on recognising Lebeau.

"What! so early, citizen?"

"Is it too early?" said Lebeau, glancing at his watch. "So it is; I was not aware of the time. But I am tired with waiting; let me into the *salon*. I will wait for the rest; I shall not be sorry for a little reposè."

"*Bon*," said the porter, sententiously; "while man reposes *men* advance."

"A profound truth, citizen Le Roux; though, if they advance on a reposing foe, they have blundering leaders unless they march through unguarded by-paths and with noiseless tread."

Following the porter up a dingy broad staircase, Lebeau was admitted in a large room, void of all other furniture than a table, two benches at its sides, and a *fauteuil* at its

head. On the mantelpiece there was a huge clock, and some iron sconces were fixed on the panelled walls.

Lebeau flung himself, with a wearied air, into the *fauteuil*. The porter looked at him with a kindly expression. He had a liking to Lebeau, whom he had served in his proper profession of messenger or *commissionnaire* before being placed by that courteous employer in the easy post he now held. Lebeau, indeed, had the art, when he pleased, of charming inferiors; his knowledge of mankind allowed him to distinguish peculiarities in each individual, and flatter the *amour propre* by deference to such eccentricities. Marc le Roux, the roughest of "red caps," had a wife of whom he was very proud. He would have called the Empress *Citoyenne Eugénie*, but he always spoke of his wife as Madame. Lebeau won his heart by always asking after Madame.

"You look tired, citizen," said the porter; "let me bring you a glass of wine."

"Thank you, *mon ami*, no. Perhaps later, if I have time, after we break up to pay my respects to Madame."

The porter smiled, bowed, and retired muttering, "*Nom d'un petit bonhomme—il n'y a rien de tel que les belles manières.*"

Left alone, Lebeau leaned his elbow on the table, resting his chin on his hand, and gazing into the dim space—for it was now, indeed, night, and little light came through the grimy panes of the one window left unclosed by shutters. He was musing deeply. This man was, in much, an enigma to himself. Was he seeking to unriddle it? A strange compound of contradictory elements. In his stormy youth there had been lightning-like flashes of good instincts, of irregular honour, of inconsistent generosity—a puissant wild nature—with strong passions of love and of hate, without fear, but not without shame. In other forms of society that love of applause which had made him seek and exult in the notoriety which he mistook for fame, might have settled down into some solid and useful ambition. He might have become great in the world's eye, for at the service of his desires there were no ordinary talents. Though too true a Parisian to be a severe student, still, on the whole, he had acquired much general information, partly from books, partly from varied commerce with mankind.

He had the gift, both by tongue and by pen, of expressing himself with force and warmth—time and necessity had improved that gift. Coveting, during his brief career of fashion, the distinctions which necessitate lavish expenditure, he had been the most reckless of spendthrifts, but the neediness which follows waste had never destroyed his original sense of personal honour. Certainly Victor de Mauléon was not, at the date of his fall, a man to whom the thought of accepting, much less of stealing, the jewels of a woman who loved him, could have occurred as a possible question of casuistry between honour and temptation. Nor could that sort of question have, throughout the sternest trials or the humblest callings to which his after-life had been subjected, forced admission into his brain. He was one of those men, perhaps the most terrible though unconscious criminals, who are the offsprings produced by intellectual power and egotistical ambition. If you had offered to Victor de Mauléon the crown of the Cæsars, on condition of his doing one of those base things which "a gentleman" cannot do—pick a pocket, cheat at cards—Victor de Mauléon would have refused the crown. He would not have refused on account of any laws of morality affecting the foundations of the social system, but from the pride of his own personality. "I, Victor de Mauléon! I pick a pocket! I cheat at cards! I!" But when something incalculably worse for the interests of society than picking a pocket or cheating at cards was concerned; when, for the sake either of private ambition or political experiment hitherto untested, and therefore very doubtful, the peace and order and happiness of millions might be exposed to the release of the most savage passions—rushing on revolutionary madness or civil massacre—then this French dare-devil would have been just as unscrupulous as any English philosopher whom a metropolitan borough might elect as its representative. The system of the Empire was in the way of Victor de Mauléon—in the way of his private ambition, in the way of his political dogmas—and therefore it must be destroyed, no matter what nor whom it crushed beneath its ruins. He was one of those plotters of revolutions not uncommon in democracies, ancient and modern, who invoke popular agencies with the less scruple because they have a supreme contempt for the populace. A man

with mental powers equal to De Maulcon's, and who sincerely loves the people and respects the grandeur of aspiration with which, in the great upheaving of their masses, they so often contrast the irrational credulities of their ignorance and the blind fury of their wrath, is always exceedingly loath to pass the terrible gulf that divides reform from revolution. He knows how rarely it happens that genuine liberty is not disarmed in the passage, and what sufferings must be undergone by those who live by their labour during the dismal intervals between the sudden destruction of one form of society and the gradual settlement of another. Such a man, however, has no type in a Victor de Maulcon. The circumstances of his life had placed this strong nature at war with sociey, and corrupted into misanthropy affections that had once been ardent. That misanthropy made his ambition more intense, because it increased his scorn for the human instruments it employed.

. . .

Victor de Maulcon knew that, however innocent of the charges that had so long darkened his name, and however —thanks to his rank, his manners, his *savoir vivre*—the aid of Louvier's countenance, and the support of his own high-born connections—he might restore himself to his rightful grade in private life, the higher prizes in public life would scarcely be within reach, to a man of his antecedents and stinted means, in the existent form and conditions of established political order. Perforce, the aristocrat must make himself democrat if he would become a political chief. Could he assist in turning upside down the actual state of things, he trusted to his individual force of character to find himself among the uppermost in the general *bouleversement*. And in the first stage of popular revolution the mob has no greater darling than the noble who deserts his order, though in the second stage it may guillotine him at the denunciation of his cobbler. A mind so sanguine and so audacious as that of Victor de Maulcon never thinks of the second step if it sees a way to the first. . .

CHAPTER VI.

THE room was in complete darkness, save where a ray from a gas-lamp at the mouth of the court came aslant through the window, when citizen LeRoux re-entered, closed the window, lighted two of the sconces, and drew forth from a drawer in the table implements of writing, which he placed thereon noiselessly, as if he feared to disturb M. Lebeau, whose head, buried in his hands, rested on the table. He seemed in a profound sleep. At last the porter gently touched the arm of the slumberer, and whispered in his ear, "It is on the stroke of ten, citizen; they will be here in a minute or so." Lebeau lifted his head drowsily.

"Eh," said he—"what?"

"You have been asleep."

"I suppose so, for I have been dreaming. Ha! I hear the door-bell. I am wide awake now."

The porter left him, and in a few minutes conducted into the *salon* two men wrapped in cloaks, despite the warmth of the summer night. Lebeau shook hands with them silently, and not less silently they laid aside their cloaks and seated themselves. Both these men appeared to belong to the upper section of the middle class. One, strongly built, with a keen expression of countenance, was a surgeon considered able in his profession, but with limited practice, owing to a current suspicion against his honour in connection with a forged will. The other, tall, meagre, with long grizzled hair and a wild unsettled look about the eyes, was a man of science; had written works well esteemed upon mathematics and electricity, also against the existence of any other creative power than that which he called 'nebulosity,' and defined to be the combination of heat and moisture. The surgeon was about the age of forty, the atheist a few years older. In another minute or so, a knock was heard against the wall. One of the men rose and touched a spring in the panel, which then flew back, and showed an opening upon a narrow stair, by which, one after the other, entered

three other members of the society. Evidently there was more than one mode of ingress and exit.

The three new-comers were not Frenchmen—one might see that at a glance; probably they had reasons for greater precaution than those who entered by the front door. One, a tall, powerfully-built man, with fair hair and beard, dressed with a certain pretension to elegance—faded threadbare elegance—exhibiting no appearance of linen, was a Pole. One a slight bald man, very dark and sallow —was an Italian. The third, who seemed like an *ouvrier* in his holiday clothes, was a Belgian.

Lebeau greeted them all with an equal courtesy, and each with an equal silence took his seat at the table.

Lebeau glanced at the clock. "*Confrères*," he said, "our number, as fixed for this *séance*, still needs two to be complete, and doubtless they will arrive in a few minutes. Till they come, we can but talk upon trifles. Permit me to offer you my cigar-case." And so saying, he who professed to be no smoker, handed his next neighbour, who was the Pole, a large cigar-case amply furnished; and the Pole, helping himself to two cigars, handed the case to the man next him—two only declining the luxury, the Italian and the Belgian. But the Pole was the only man who took two cigars.

Steps were now heard on the stairs, the door opened, and citizen Le Roux ushered in, one after the other, two men, this time unmistakably French — to an experienced eye unmistakably Parisians: the one a young beardless man, who seemed almost boyish, with a beautiful face, and a stinted, meagre frame; the other a stalwart man of about eight-and-twenty, dressed partly as an *ouvrier*, not in his Sunday clothes, rather affecting the *blouse*,—not that he wore that antique garment, but that he was in rough costume unbrushed and stained, with thick shoes and coarse stockings, and a workman's cap. But of all who gathered round the table at which M. Lebeau presided, he had the most distinguished exterior. A virile honest exterior, a massive open forehead, intelligent eyes, a handsome clear-cut incisive profile, and solid jaw. The expression of the face was stern, but not mean—an expression which might have become an ancient baron as well as a modern workman—in it plenty of haughtiness and of will, and still more of self-esteem.

"*Confrères*," said Lebeau, rising, and every eye turned to him, "our number for the present *séance* is complete. To business. Since we last met, our cause has advanced with rapid and not with noiseless stride. I need not tell you that Louis Bonaparte has virtually abnegated *Les idées Napoléoniennes*—a fatal mistake for him, a glorious advance for us. The liberty of the press must very shortly be achieved, and with it personal government must end. When the autocrat once is compelled to go by the advice of his Ministers, look for sudden changes. His Ministers will be but weathercocks, turned hither and thither according as the wind chops at Paris; and Paris is the temple of the winds. The new revolution is almost at hand." (Murmurs of applause.) "It would move the laughter of the Tuileries and its Ministers, of the Bourse and of its gamblers, of every dainty *salon* of this silken city of would-be philosophers and wits, if they were told that here within this mouldering *baraque*, eight men, so little blest by fortune, so little known to fame as ourselves, met to concert the fall of an empire. The Government would not deem us important enough to notice our existence."

"I know not that," interrupted the Pole.

"Ah, pardon," resumed the orator;" "I should have confined my remark to the *five* of us who are French. I did injustice to the illustrious antecedents of our foreign allies. I know that you, Thaddeus Loubisky—that you, Leonardo Raselli—have been too eminent for hands hostile to tyrants not to be marked with a black cross in the books of the police. I know that you, Jan Vanderstegen, if hitherto unscarred by those wounds in defence of freedom which despots and cowards would fain miscall the brands of the felon, still owe it to your special fraternity to keep your movements rigidly concealed. The tyrant would suppress the International Society, and forbids it the liberty of congress. To you three is granted the secret entrance to our council-hall. But we Frenchmen are as yet safe in our supposed insignificance. *Confrères*, permit me to impress on you the causes why, insignificant as we seem, we are really formidable. In the first place, we are few: the great mistake in most secret associations has been, to admit many councillors; and disunion enters wherever many tongues can wrangle. In the next place, though so

few in council, we are legion when the time comes for action; because we are representative men, each of his own section, and each section is capable of an indefinite expansion.

"You, valiant Pole—you, politic Italian—enjoy the confidence of thousands now latent in unwatched homes and harmless callings, but who, when you lift a finger, will, like the buried dragon's teeth, spring up into armed men. You, Jan Vanderstegen, the trusted delegate from Verviers, that swarming camp of wronged labour in its revolt from the iniquities of capital—you, when the hour arrives, can touch the wire that flashes the telegram 'Arise' through all the lands in which workmen combine against their oppressors.

"Of us five Frenchmen, let me speak more modestly. You—sage and scholar—Felix Ruvigny, honoured alike for the profundity of your science and the probity of your manners, induced to join us by your abhorrence of priest-craft and superstition,—you have a wide connection among all the enlightened reasoners who would emancipate the mind of man from the trammels of Church-born fable—and when the hour arrives in which it is safe to say, '*Delenda est Roma*,' you know where to find the pens that are more victorious than swords against a Church and a Creed. You" (turning to the surgeon)—"you, Gaspard le Noy, whom a vile calumny has robbed of the throne in your profession, so justly due to your skill—you, nobly scorning the rich and great, have devoted yourself to tend and heal the humble and the penniless, so that you have won the popular title of the '*Médecin des Pauvres*,'—when the time comes wherein soldiers shall fly before the *sansculottes*, and the mob shall begin the work which they who move mobs will complete, the clients of Gaspard le Noy will be the avengers of his wrongs.

"You, Armand Monnier, simple *ouvrier*, but of illustrious parentage, for your grandsire was the beloved friend of the virtuous Robespierre, your father perished a hero and a martyr in the massacre of the *coup d'état*—you, cultured in the eloquence of Robespierre himself, and in the persuasive philosophy of Robespierre's teacher, Rousseau—you, the idolised orator of the Red Republicans,—you will be indeed a chief of dauntless bands when the trumpet sounds for battle. Young publicist and poet, Gustave Rameau—I care

not which you are at present, I know what you will be soon —you need nothing for the development of your powers over the many but an organ for their manifestation. Of that anon. I now descend into the bathos of egotism. I am compelled lastly to speak of myself. It was at Marseilles and Lyons, as you already know, that I first conceived the plan of this representative association. For years before I had been in familiar intercourse with the friends of freedom—that is, with the foes of the Empire. They are not all poor; some few are rich and generous. I do not say these rich and few concur in the ultimate objects of the poor and many; but they concur in the first object, the démolition of that which exists—the Empire. In the course of my special calling of negotiator or agent in the towns of the *Midi*, I formed friendships with some of these prosperous malcontents. And out of these friendships I conceived the idea which is embodied in this council.

"According to that conception, while the council may communicate as it will with all societies, secret or open, having revolution for their object, the council refuses to merge itself in any other confederation: it stands aloof and independent, it declines to admit into its code any special articles of faith in a future beyond the bounds to which it limits its design and its force. That design unites, us; to go beyond would divide. We all agree to destroy the Napoleonic dynasty; none of us might agree as to what we should place in its stead. All of us here present might say, 'A republic,' Ay, but of what kind? Vanderstegen would have it socialistic; Monnier goes further, and would have it communistic, on the principles of Fourier; Le Noy adheres to the policy of Danton, and would commence the republic by a reign of terror; our Italian ally abhors the notion of general massacre, and advocates individual assassination. Ruvigny would annihilate the worship of a Deity; Monnier holds with Voltaire and Robespierre, that, 'if there were no Deity, it would be necessary to man to create one.' *Bref*, we could not agree upon any plan for the new edifice, and therefore we refuse to discuss one till the ploughshare has gone over the ruins of the old. But I have another and more practical reason for keeping our council distinct from all societies with professed objects beyond that of demolition. We need a certain command of

money. It is I who bring to you that, and—how? Not from my own resources; they but suffice to support myself. Not by contributions from *ouvriers*, who, as you well know, will subscribe only for their own ends in the victory of workmen over masters. I bring money to you from the coffers of the rich malcontents. Their politics are not those of most present; their politics are what they term moderate. Some are indeed for a republic, but for a republic strong in defence of order, in support of property; others—and they are the more numerous and the more rich—for a constitutional monarchy, and, if possible, for the abridgment of universal suffrage, which, in their eyes, tends only to anarchy in the towns and arbitrary rule under priestly influence in the rural districts. They would not subscribe a *sou* if they thought it went to further the designs whether of Ruvigny the atheist, or of Monnier, who would enlist the Deity of Rousseau on the side of the *drapeau rouge*—not a *sou* if they knew I had the honour to boast such *confrères* as I see around me. They subscribe, as we concert, for the fall of Bonaparte. The policy I adopt I borrow from the policy of the English Liberals. In England, potent *millionnaires*, high-born dukes, devoted Churchmen, belonging to the Liberal party, accept the services of men who look forward to measures which would ruin capital, eradicate aristocracy, and destroy the Church, provided these men combine with them in some immediate step onward against the Tories. They have a proverb which I thus adapt to French localities: If a train passes Fontainebleau on its way to Marseilles, why should I not take it to Fontainebleau because other passengers are going on to Marseilles?

"*Confrères*, it seems to me the moment has come when we may venture some of the fund placed at my disposal to other purposes than those to which it has been hitherto devoted. I propose, therefore, to set up a journal under the auspices of Gustave Rameau as editor-in-chief—a journal which, if he listen to my advice, will create no small sensation. It will begin with a tone of impartiality: it will refrain from all violence of invective; it will have wit, it will have sentiment, and eloquence; it will win its way into the *salons* and *cafés* of educated men; and then, and then, when it does change from polished satire into

fierce denunciation and sides with the *blouses*, its effect will be startling and terrific. Of this I will say more to Citizen Rameau in private. To you I need not enlarge upon the fact that, at Paris, a combination of men, though immeasurably superior to us in status or influence, without a journal at command, is nowhere; with such a journal, written not to alarm but to seduce fluctuating opinions, a combination of men immeasurably inferior to us may be anywhere.

"*Confrères*, this affair settled, I proceed to distribute amongst you sums of which each who receives will render me an account, except our valued *confrère* the Pole. All that we can subscribe to the cause of humanity, a representative of Poland requires for himself." (A suppressed laugh among all but the Pole, who looked round with a grave, imposing air, as much as to say, "What is there to laugh at?—a simple truth.")

M. Lebeau then presented to each of his *confrères* a sealed envelope, containing no doubt a bank-note, and perhaps also private instructions as to its disposal. It was one of his rules to make the amount of any sum granted to an individual member of the society from the fund at his disposal a confidential secret between himself and the recipient. Thus jealousy was avoided if the sums were unequal; and unequal they generally were. In the present instance the two largest sums were given to the *Médecin des Pauvres* and to the delegate from Verviers. Both were no doubt to be distributed among "the poor," at the discretion of the trustee appointed.

Whatever rules with regard to the distribution of money M. Lebeau laid down were acquiesced in without demur, for the money was found exclusively by himself, and furnished without the pale of the Secret Council, of which he had made himself founder and dictator. Some other business was then discussed, sealed reports from each member were handed to the president, who placed them unopened in his pocket, and resumed—

"*Confrères*, our *séance* is now concluded. The period for our next meeting must remain indefinite, for I myself shall leave Paris as soon as I have set on foot the journal, on the details of which I will confer with Citizen Rameau. I am not satisfied with the progress made by the two travel-

ling missionaries who complete our Council of Ten; and though I do not question their zeal, I think my experience may guide it if I take a journey to the towns of Bordeaux and Marseilles, where they now are. But should circumstances demanding concert or action arise, you may be sure that I will either summon a meeting or transmit instructions to such of our members as may be most usefully employed. For the present, *confrères*, you are relieved. Remain only you, dear young author."

CHAPTER VII.

LEFT alone with Gustave Rameau, the President of the Secret Council remained silently musing for some moments; but his countenance was no longer moody and overcast—his nostrils were dilated, as in triumph—there was a half-smile of pride on his lips. Rameau watched him curiously and admiringly. The young man had the impressionable, excitable temperament common to Parisian genius—especially when it nourishes itself on absinthe. He enjoyed the romance of belonging to a secret society; he was acute enough to recognise the sagacity by which this small conclave was kept out of those crazed combinations for impracticable theories more likely to lead adventurers to the Tarpeian Rock than to the Capitol; while yet those crazed combinations might, in some critical moment, become strong instruments in the hands of practical ambition. Lebeau fascinated him, and took colossal proportions in his intoxicated vision—vision indeed intoxicated at this moment, for before it floated the realised image of his aspirations,—a journal of which he was to be the editor-in-chief—in which his poetry, his prose, should occupy space as large as he pleased—through which his name, hitherto scarce known beyond a literary clique, would resound in *salon* and club and *café*, and become a familiar music on the lips of fashion. And he owed this to the man seated there—a prodigious man.

"*Cher poète*," said Lebeau, breaking silence, "it gives me no mean pleasure to think I am opening a career to one whose talents fit him for those goals on which they who reach write names that posterity shall read. Struck with certain articles of yours in the journal made celebrated by the wit and gaiety of Savarin, I took pains privately to inquire into your birth, your history, connections, antecedents. All confirmed my first impression, that you were exactly the writer I wish to secure to our cause. I therefore sought you in your rooms, unintroduced and a stranger,

in order to express my admiration of your compositions. *Bref*, we soon became friends; and after comparing minds, I admitted you, at your request, into this Secret Council. Now, in proposing to you the conduct of the journal I would establish, for which I am prepared to find all necessary funds, I am compelled to make imperative conditions. Nominally you will be editor-in-chief: that station, if the journal succeeds, will secure you position and fortune; if it fail, you fail with it. But we will not speak of failure; I must have it succeed. Our interest, then, is the same. Before that interest all puerile vanities fade away. Nominally, I say, you are editor-in-chief; but all the real work of editing will, at first, be done by others."

"Ah!" exclaimed Rameau, aghast and stunned. Lebeau resumed—

"To establish the journal I propose needs more than the genius of youth; it needs the tact and experience of mature years."

Rameau sank back on his chair with a sullen sneer on his pale lips. Decidedly Lebeau was not so great a man as he had thought.

"A certain portion of the journal," continued Lebeau, "will be exclusively appropriated to your pen."

Rameau's lip lost the sneer.

"But your pen must be therein restricted to compositions of pure fancy, disporting in a world that does not exist; or, if on graver themes connected with the beings of the world that does exist, the subjects will be dictated to you and revised. Yet even in the higher departments of a journal intended to make way at its first start, we need the aid, not indeed of men who write better than you, but of men whose fame is established—whose writings, good or bad, the public run to read, and will find good even if they are bad. You must consign one column to the playful comments and witticisms of Savarin."

"Savarin? But he has a journal of his own. He will not, as an author, condescend to write in one just set up by me. And as a politician, he as certainly will not aid in an ultra-democratic revolution. If he care for politics at all, he is a constitutionalist, an Orleanist."

"*Enfant!* as an author Savarin will condescend to contribute to your journal, 1stly, because it in no way attempts

to interfere with his own; 2ndly—I can tell you a secret—Savarin's journal no longer suffices for his existence; he has sold more than two-thirds of its property; he is in debt, and his creditor is urgent; and to-morrow you will offer Savarin 30,000 francs for one column from his pen, and signed by his name, for two months from the day the journal starts. He will accept, partly because the sum will clear off the debt that hampers him, partly because he will take care that the amount becomes known; and that will help him to command higher terms for the sale of the remaining shares in the journal he now edits, for the new book which you told me he intended to write, and for the new journal which he will be sure to set up as soon as he has disposed of the old one. You say that, as a politician, Savarin, an Orleanist, will not aid in an ultra-democratic revolution. Who asks him to do so? Did I not imply at the meeting that we commence our journal with politics the mildest? Though revolutions are not made with rose-water, it is rose-water that nourishes their roots. The polite cynicism of authors, read by those who float on the surface of society, prepares the way for the social ferment in its deeps. Had there been no Voltaire, there would have been no Camille Desmoulins. Had there been no Diderot, there would have been no Marat. We start as polite cynics. Of all cynics Savarin is the politest. But when I bid high for him, it is his clique that I bid for. Without his clique he is but a wit; with his clique, a power. Partly out of that clique, partly out of a circle beyond it, which Savarin can more or less influence, I select ten. Here is the list of them; study it. *Entre nous*, I esteem their writings as little as I do artificial flies; but they are the artificial flies at which, in this particular season of the year, the public rise. You must procure at least five of the ten; and I leave you *carte blanche* as to the terms. Savarin gained, the best of them will be proud of being his associates. Observe, none of these *messieurs* of brilliant imagination are to write political articles; those will be furnished to you anonymously, and inserted without erasure or omission. When you have secured Savarin, and five at least of the *collaborateurs* in the list, write to me at my office. I give you four days to do this; and the day the journal starts you enter into the income of 15,000 francs a-year, with a

rise in salary proportioned to profits. Are you contented with the terms?"

"Of course I am; but supposing I do not gain the aid of Savarin, or five at least of the list you give, which I see at a glance contains names the most *à la mode* in this kind of writing, more than one of them of high social rank, whom it is difficult for me even to approach—if, I say, I fail?"

"What! with a *carte blanche* of terms? fie! Are you a Parisian? Well, to answer you frankly, if you fail in so easy a task, you are not the man to edit our journal, and I shall find another. *Allez, courage!* Take my advice; see Savarin the first thing to-morrow morning. Of course, my name and calling you will keep a profound secret from him as from all. Say as mysteriously as you can that parties you are forbidden to name instruct you to treat with M. Savarin, and offer him the terms I have specified, the 30,000 francs paid to him in advance the moment he signs the simple memorandum of agreement. The more mysterious you are, the more you will impose—that is, wherever you offer money and don't ask for it."

Here Lebeau took up his hat, and, with a courteous nod of adieu, lightly descended the gloomy stairs.

CHAPTER VIII.

At night, after this final interview with Lebeau, Graham took leave for good of his lodgings in Montmartre, and returned to his apartment in the Rue d'Anjou. He spent several hours of the next morning in answering numerous letters, accumulated during his absence. Late in the afternoon he had an interview with M. Renard, who, as at that season of the year he was not overbusied with other affairs, engaged to obtain leave to place his services at Graham's command during the time requisite for inquiries at Aix, and to be in readiness to start the next day. Graham then went forth to pay one or two farewell visits; and these over, bent his way through the Champs Elysées towards Isaura's villa, when he suddenly encountered Rochebriant on horseback. The Marquis courteously dismounted, committing his horse to the care of the groom, and, linking his arm in Graham's, expressed his pleasure at seeing him again; then, with some visible hesitation and embarrassment, he turned the conversation towards the political aspects of France.

"There was," he said, "much in certain words of yours, when we last walked together in this very path, that sank deeply into my mind at the time, and over which I have of late still more earnestly reflected. You spoke of the duties a Frenchman owed to France, and the 'impolicy' of remaining aloof from all public employment on the part of those attached to the Legitimist cause."

"True, it cannot be the policy of any party to forget that between the irrevocable past and the uncertain future there intervenes the action of the present time."

"Should you, as an impartial bystander, consider it dishonourable in me if I entered the military service under the ruling sovereign?"

"Certainly not, if your country needed you."

"And it may, may it not? I hear vague rumours of

coming war in almost every *salon* I frequent. There has been gunpowder in the atmosphere we breathe ever since the battle of Sadowa. What think you of German arrogance and ambition? Will they suffer the swords of France to rust in their scabbards?"

"My dear Marquis, I should incline to put the question otherwise. Will the jealous *amour propre* of France permit the swords of Germany to remain sheathed? But in either case, no politician can see without grave apprehension two nations so warlike, close to each other, divided by a borderland that one covets and the other will not yield, each armed to the teeth; the one resolved to brook no rival, the other equally determined to resist all aggression. And therefore, as you say, war is in the atmosphere; and we may also hear, in the clouds that give no sign of dispersion, the growl of the gathering thunder. War may come any day; and if France be not at once the victor——"

"France not at once the victor?" interrupted Alain, passionately; "and against a Prussian! Permit me to say no Frenchman can believe that."

"Let no man despise a foe," said Graham, smiling half sadly. "However, I must not incur the danger of wounding your national susceptibilities. To return to the point you raise. If France needed the aid of her best and bravest, a true descendant of Henri Quatre ought to blush for his ancient *noblesse* were a Rochebriant to say, 'But I don't like the colour of the flag.'"

"Thank you," said Alain, simply; "that is enough." There was a pause, the young men walking on slowly, arm in arm. And then there flashed across Graham's mind the recollection of talk on another subject in that very path. Here he had spoken to Alain in deprecation of any possible alliance with Isaura Cicogna, the destined actress and public singer. His cheek flushed; his heart smote him. What! had he spoken slightingly of her—of *her?* What—if she became his own wife? What! had he himself failed in the respect which he would demand as her right from the loftiest of his high-born kindred? What, too, would this man, of fairer youth than himself, think of that disparaging counsel, when he heard that the monitor had won the prize from which he had warned another? Would it not seem that he had but spoken in the mean cunning

dictated by the fear of a worthier rival? Stung by these thoughts, he arrested his steps, and, looking the Marquis full in the face, said, "You remind me of one subject in our talk many weeks since, it is my duty to remind you of another. At that time you, and, speaking frankly, I myself, acknowledged the charm in the face of a young Italian lady. I told you then that, on learning she was intended for the stage, the charm for me had vanished. I said, bluntly, that it should vanish perhaps still more utterly for a noble of your illustrious name; you remember?"

"Yes," answered Alain, hesitatingly, and with a look of surprise.

"I wish now to retract all I said thereon. Mademoiselle Cicogna is not bent on the profession for which she was educated. She would willingly renounce all idea of entering it. The only counterweight which, viewed whether by my reason or my prejudices, could be placed in the opposite scale to that of the excellences which might make any man proud to win her, is withdrawn. I have become acquainted with her since the date of our conversation. Hers is a mind which harmonises with the loveliness of her face. In one word, Marquis, I should deem myself honoured, as well as blest, by such a bride. It was due to her that I should say this; it was due also to you, in case you retain the impression I sought in ignorance to efface. And I am bound, as a gentleman, to obey this twofold duty, even though in so doing I bring upon myself the affliction of a candidate for the hand to which I would fain myself aspire —a candidate with pretensions in every way far superior to my own."

An older or a more cynical man than Alain de Rochebriant might well have found something suspicious in a confession thus singularly volunteered; but the Marquis was himself so loyal that he had no doubt of the loyalty of Graham.

"I reply to you," he said, "with a frankness which finds an example in your own. The first fair face which attracted my fancy since my arrival at Paris was that of the Italian *demoiselle* of whom you speak in terms of such respect. I do think if I had then been thrown into her society, and found her to be such as you no doubt truthfully describe,

that fancy might have become a very grave emotion. I was then so poor, so friendless, so despondent. Your words of warning impressed me at the time, but less durably than you might suppose; for that very night as I sat in my solitary attic I said to myself, 'Why should I shrink, with an obsolete old-world prejudice, from what my forefathers would have termed a *mésalliance?* What is the value of my birthright now? None—worse than none. It excludes me from all careers; my name is but a load that weighs me down. Why should I make that name a curse as well as a burden? Nothing is left to me but that which is permitted to all men—wedded and holy love. Could I win to my heart the smile of a woman who brings me that dower, the home of my fathers would lose its gloom." And therefore, if at that time I had become familiarly acquainted with her who had thus attracted my eye and engaged my thoughts, she might have become my destiny; but now!"

"But now?"

"Things have changed. I am no longer poor, friendless, solitary. I have entered the world of my equals as a Rochebriant; I have made myself responsible for the dignity of my name. I could not give that name to one, however peerless in herself, of whom the world would say, 'But for her marriage she would have been a singer on the stage!' I will own more: the fancy I conceived for the first fair face, other fair faces have dispelled. At this moment, however, I have no thought of marriage; and having known the anguish of struggle, the privations of poverty, I would ask no woman to share the hazard of my return to them. You might present me, then, safely to this beautiful Italian—certain, indeed, that I should be her admirer; equally certain that I could not become your rival."

There was something in this speech that jarred upon Graham's sensitive pride. But, on the whole, he felt relieved, both in honour and in heart. After a few more words, the two young men shook hands and parted. Alain remounted his horse. The day was now declining. Graham hailed a vacant *fiacre*, and directed the driver to Isaura's villa.

CHAPTER IX.

ISAURA.

THE sun was sinking slowly as Isaura sat at her window, gazing dreamily on the rose-hued clouds that made the western border-land between earth and heaven. On the table before her lay a few sheets of MS. hastily written, not yet reperused. That restless mind of hers had left its trace on the MS.

It is characteristic perhaps of the different genius of the sexes, that woman takes to written composition more impulsively, more intuitively, than man—letter-writing, to him a task-work, is to her a recreation. Between the age of sixteen and the date of marriage, six well-educated clever girls out of ten keep a journal; not one well-educated man in ten thousand does. So, without serious and settled intention of becoming an author, how naturally a girl of ardent feeling and vivid fancy seeks in poetry or romance a confessional—an outpouring of thought and sentiment, which are mysteries to herself till she has given them words—and which, frankly revealed on the page, she would not, perhaps could not, utter orally to a living ear.

During the last few days, the desire to create in the realm of fable beings constructed by her own breath, spiritualised by her own soul, had grown irresistibly upon this fair child of song. In fact, when Graham's words had decided the renunciation of her destined career, her instinctive yearnings for the utterance of those sentiments or thoughts which can only find expression in some form of art, denied the one vent, irresistibly impelled her to the other. And in this impulse she was confirmed by the thought that here at least there was nothing which her English friend could disapprove—none of the perils that beset the actress. Here it seemed as if, could she but succeed, her fame would be grateful to the pride of all who

loved her. Here was a career ennobled by many a woman, and side by side in rivalry with renowned men. To her it seemed that, could she in this achieve an honoured name, that name took its place at once amid the higher ranks of the social world, and in itself brought a priceless dowry and a starry crown. It was, however, not till after the visit to Enghien that this ambition took practical life and form.

One evening after her return to Paris, by an effort so involuntary that it seemed to her *no* effort, she had commenced a tale—without plan—without method—without knowing in one page what would fill the next. Her slight fingers hurried on as if, like the pretended spirit manifestations, impelled by an invisible agency without the pale of the world. She was intoxicated by the mere joy of inventing ideal images. In her own special art an elaborate artist, here she had no thought of art; if art was in her work, it sprang unconsciously from the harmony between herself and her subject—as it is, perhaps, with the early soarings of the genuine lyric poets, in contrast to the dramatic. For the true lyric poet is intensely personal, intensely subjective. It is himself that he expresses, that he represents—and he almost ceases to be lyrical when he seeks to go out of his own existence into that of others with whom he has no sympathy, no *rapport*. This tale was vivid with genius as yet untutored—genius in its morning freshness, full of beauties, full of faults. Isaura distinguished not the faults from the beauties. She felt only a vague persuasion that there was a something higher and brighter—a something more true to her own idiosyncrasy—than could be achieved by the art that 'sings other people's words to other people's music.' From the work thus commenced she had now paused. And it seemed to her fancies that between her inner self and the scene without, whether in the skies and air and sunset, or in the abodes of men stretching far and near, till lost amid the roofs and domes of the great city, she had fixed and riveted the link of a sympathy hitherto fluctuating, unsubstantial, evanescent, undefined. Absorbed in her reverie, she did not notice the deepening of the short twilight, till the servant entering drew the curtains between her and the world without, and placed the lamp on the table beside her.

Then she turned away with a restless sigh, her eyes fell on the MS., but the charm of it was gone. A sentiment of distrust in its worth had crept into her thoughts, unconsciously to herself, and the page open before her at an uncompleted sentence seemed unwelcome and wearisome as a copy-book is to a child condemned to relinquish a fairy tale half told, and apply himself to a task half done. She fell again into a reverie, when, starting as from a dream, she heard herself addressed by name, and turning round saw Savarin and Gustave Rameau in the room.

"We are come, Signorina," said Savarin, "to announce to you a piece of news, and to hazard a petition. The news is this: my young friend here has found a Mæcenas who has the good taste so to admire his lucubrations under the *nom de plume* of Alphonse de Valcour as to volunteer the expenses for starting a new journal, of which Gustave Rameau is to be editor-in-chief; and I have promised to assist him as contributor for the first two months. I have given him notes of introduction to certain other *feuilletonistes* and critics whom he has on his list. But all put together would not serve to float the journal like a short *roman* from Madame de Grantmesnil. Knowing your intimacy with that eminent artist, I venture to back Rameau's supplication that you would exert your influence on his behalf. As to the *honoraires*, she has but to name them."

"*Carte blanche*," cried Rameau, eagerly.

"You know Eulalie too well, M. Savarin," answered Isaura, with a smile half reproachful, "to suppose that she is a mercenary in letters, and sells her services to the best bidder."

"Bah, *belle enfant!*" said Savarin, with his gay light laugh. "Business is business, and books as well as razors are made to sell. But, of course, a proper prospectus of the journal must accompany your request to write in it. Meanwhile Rameau will explain to you, as he has done to me, that the journal in question is designed for circulation among readers of *les hautes classes*: it is to be pleasant and airy, full of *bons mots* and anecdote; witty, but not ill-natured. Politics to be liberal, of course, but of elegant admixture—champagne and seltzer-water. In fact, however, I suspect that the politics will be a very inconsiderable feature in this organ of fine arts and manners; some amateur

scribbler in the *beau monde* will supply them. For the rest, if my introductory letters are successful, Madame de Grantmesnil will not be in bad company."

"You will write to Madame de Grantmesnil?" asked Rameau, pleadingly.

"Certainly I will, as soon——"

"As soon as you have the prospectus, and the names of the *collaborateurs*," interrupted Rameau. "I hope to send you these in a very few days."

While Rameau was thus speaking, Savarin had seated himself by the table, and his eye mechanically resting on the open MS. lighted by chance upon a sentence—an aphorism—embodying a very delicate sentiment in very felicitous diction. One of those choice condensations of thought, suggesting so much more than is said, which are never found in mediocre writers, and, rare even in the best, come upon us like truths seized by surprise.

"*Morbleu!*" exclaimed Savarin, in the impulse of genuine admiration, "but this is beautiful; what is more, it is original,"—and he read the words aloud. Blushing with shame and resentment, Isaura turned and hastily placed her hand on the MS.

"Pardon," said Savarin, humbly; "I confess my sin, but it was so unpremeditated that it does not merit a severe penance. Do not look at me so reproachfully. We all know that young ladies keep commonplace-books in which they enter passages that strike them in the works they read. And you have but shown an exquisite taste in selecting this gem. Do tell me where you found it. Is it somewhere in Lamartine?"

"No," answered Isaura, half inaudibly, and with an effort to withdraw the paper. Savarin gently detained her hand, and looking earnestly into her tell-tale face, divined her secret.

"It is your own, Signorina! Accept the congratulations of a very practised and somewhat fastidious critic. If the rest of what you write resembles this sentence, contribute to Rameau's journal, and I answer for its success."

Rameau approached half incredulous, half envious.

"My dear child," resumed Savarin, drawing away the MS. from Isaura's coy, reluctant clasp, "do permit me to cast a glance over these papers. For what I yet know,

there may be here more promise of fame than ever you could gain as a singer."

The electric chord in Isaura's heart was touched. Who cannot conceive what the young writer feels, especially the young woman-writer, when hearing the first cheery note of praise from the lips of a writer of established fame?

"Nay, this cannot be worth your reading," said Isaura, falteringly: "I have never written anything of the kind before, and this is a riddle to me. I know not," she added, with a sweet low laugh, "why I began, nor how I should end it."

"So much the better," said Savarin; and he took the MS., withdrew to a recess by the further window, and seated himself there, reading silently and quickly, but now and then with a brief pause of reflection.

Rameau placed himself beside Isaura on the divan, and began talking with her earnestly—earnestly, for it was about himself and his aspiring hopes. Isaura, on the other hand, more woman-like than author-like, ashamed even to seem absorbed in herself and *her* hopes, and with her back turned, in the instinct of that shame, against the reader of her MS.,—Isaura listened and sought to interest herself solely in the young fellow-author. Seeking to do so she succeeded genuinely, for ready sympathy was a prevalent characteristic of her nature.

"Oh," said Rameau, "I am at the turning-point of my life. Ever since boyhood I have been haunted with the words of André Chénier on the morning he was led to the scaffold: 'And yet there was something here,' striking his forehead. Yes, I, poor, low-born, launching myself headlong in the chase of a name; I, underrated, uncomprehended, indebted even for a hearing to the patronage of an amiable trifler like Savarin, ranked by petty rivals in a grade below themselves,—I now see before me, suddenly, abruptly presented, the expanding gates into fame and fortune. Assist me, you!"

"But how?" said Isaura, already forgetting her MS.; and certainly Rameau did not refer to that.

"How!" echoed Rameau; "how! But do you not see—or, at least, do you not conjecture—this journal of which Savarin speaks contains my present and my future? Present independence, opening to fortune and renown. Ay,—

and who shall say? renown beyond that of the mere writer. Behind the gaudy scaffolding of this rickety Empire, a new social edifice unperceived arises; and in that edifice the halls of State shall be given to the men who help obscurely to build it—to men like me." Here, drawing her hand into his own, fixing on her the most imploring gaze of his dark persuasive eyes, and utterly unconscious of bathos in his adjuration, he added—"Plead for me with your whole mind and heart; use your uttermost influence with the illustrious writer, whose pen can assure the fates of my journal."

Here the door suddenly opened, and following the servant, who announced unintelligibly his name, there entered Graham Vane.

CHAPTER X.

THE Englishman halted at the threshold. His eye, passing rapidly over the figure of Savarin reading in the window-niche, rested upon Rameau and Isaura seated on the same divan, he with her hand clasped in both his own, and bending his face towards hers so closely that a loose tress of her hair seemed to touch his forehead.

The Englishman halted, and no revolution which changes the habitudes and forms of States was ever so sudden as that, which passed without a word in the depths of his unconjectured heart. The heart has no history which philosophers can recognise. An ordinary political observer, contemplating the condition of a nation, may very safely tell us what effects must follow the causes patent to his eyes. But the wisest and most far-seeing sage, looking at a man at one o'clock, cannot tell us what revulsions of his whole being may be made ere the clock strike two.

As Isaura rose to greet her visitor, Savarin came from the window-niche, the MS. in his hand.

"Son of perfidious Albion," said Savarin, gaily, "we feared you had deserted the French alliance. Welcome back to Paris, and the *entente cordiale*."

"Would I could stay to enjoy such welcome. But I must again quit Paris."

"Soon to return, *n'est-ce pas?* Paris is an irresistible magnet to *les beaux esprits*. *Apropos* of *beaux esprits*, be sure to leave orders with your bookseller, if you have one, to enter your name as subscriber to a new journal."

"Certainly, if M. Savarin recommends it."

"He recommends it as a matter of course; he writes in it," said Rameau.

"A sufficient guarantee for its excellence. What is the name of the journal?"

"Not yet thought of," answered Savarin. "Babes must be born before they are christened; but it will be instruc-

tion enough to your bookseller to order the new journal to be edited by Gustave Rameau."

Bowing ceremoniously to the editor in prospect, Graham said, half ironically, "May I hope that in the department of criticism you will not be too hard upon poor Tasso?"

"Never fear; the Signorina, who adores Tasso, will take him under her special protection," said Savarin, interrupting Rameau's sullen and embarrassed reply.

Graham's brow slightly contracted. "Mademoiselle," he said, "is then to be united in the conduct of this journal with M. Gustave Rameau?"

"No, indeed!" exclaimed Isaura, somewhat frightened at the idea.

"But I hope," said Savarin, "that the Signorina may become a contributor too important for an editor to offend by insulting her favourites, Tasso included. Rameau and I came hither to entreat her influence with her intimate and illustrious friend, Madame de Grantmesnil, to insure the success of our undertaking by sanctioning the announcement of her name as a contributor."

"Upon social questions—such as the laws of marriage?" said Graham, with a sarcastic smile, which concealed the quiver of his lip and the pain in his voice.

"Nay," answered Savarin, "our journal will be too sportive, I hope, for matters so profound. We would rather have Madame de Grantmesnil's aid in some short *roman*, which will charm the fancy of all and offend the opinions of none. But since I came into the room, I care less for the Signorina's influence with the great authoress," and he glanced significantly at the MS.

"How so?" asked Graham, his eye following the glance.

"If the writer of this MS. will conclude what she has begun, we shall be independent of Madame de Grantmesnil."

"Fie!" cried Isaura, impulsively, her face and neck bathed in blushes—"fie! such words are a mockery."

Graham gazed at her intently, and then turned his eyes on Savarin. He guessed aright the truth. "Mademoiselle then is an author? In the style of her friend Madame de Grantmesnil?"

"Bah!" said Savarin, "I should indeed be guilty of

mockery if I paid the Signorina so false a compliment as to say that in a first effort she attained to the style of one of the most finished sovereigns of language that has ever swayed the literature of France. When I say, 'Give us this tale completed, and I shall be consoled if the journal does not gain the aid of Madame de Grantmesnil,' I mean that in these pages there is that nameless charm of freshness and novelty which compensates for many faults never committed by a practised pen like Madame de Grantmesnil's. My dear young lady, go on with this story—finish it. When finished, do not disdain any suggestions I may offer in the way of correction. And I will venture to predict to you so brilliant a career as author, that you will not regret should you resign for that career the bravos you could command as actress and singer." The Englishman pressed his hand convulsively to his heart, as if smitten by a sudden spasm. But as his eyes rested on Isaura's face, which had become radiant with the enthusiastic delight of genius when the path it would select opens before it as if by a flash from heaven, whatever of jealous irritation, whatever of selfish pain he might before have felt, was gone, merged in a sentiment of unutterable sadness and compassion. Practical man as he was, he knew so well all the dangers, all the snares, all the sorrows, all the scandals menacing name and fame, that in the world of Paris must beset the fatherless girl who, not less in authorship than on the stage, leaves the safeguard of private life for ever behind her,—who becomes a prey to the tongues of the public. At Paris, how slender is the line that divides the authoress from the *Bohémienne!* He sank into his chair silently, and passed his hand over his eyes, as if to shut out a vision of the future.

Isaura in her excitement did not notice the effect on her English visitor. She could not have divined such an effect as possible. On the contrary, even subordinate to her joy at the thought that she had not mistaken the instincts which led her to a nobler vocation than that of the singer, that the cage-bar was opened, and space bathed in sunshine was inviting the new-felt wings,—subordinate even to that joy was a joy more wholly more simply woman's. "If," thought she in this joy, "if this be true, my proud ambition is realised; all disparities of worth and fortune are

annulled between me and him to whom I would bring no shame of *mésalliance!*" Poor dreamer, poor child!

"You will let me see what you have written," said Rameau, somewhat imperiously, in the sharp voice habitual to him, and which pierced Graham's ear like a splinter of glass.

"No—not now; when finished."

"You *will* finish it?"

"Oh yes; how can I help it after such encouragement?" She held out her hand to Savarin, who kissed it gallantly; then her eyes intuitively sought Graham's. By that time he had recovered his self-possession: he met her look tranquilly and with a smile; but the smile chilled her—she knew not why.

The conversation then passed upon books and authors of the day, and was chiefly supported by the satirical pleasantries of Savarin, who was in high good spirits.

Graham, who, as we know, had come with the hope of seeing Isaura alone, and with the intention of uttering words which, however guarded, might yet in absence serve as links of union, now no longer coveted that interview, no longer meditated those words. He soon rose to depart.

"Will you dine with me to-morrow?" asked Savarin. "Perhaps I may induce the Signorina and Rameau to offer you the temptation of meeting them."

"By to-morrow I shall be leagues away."

Isaura's heart sank. This time the MS. was fairly forgotten.

"You never said you were going so soon," cried Savarin. "When do you come back, vile deserter?"

"I cannot even guess. Monsieur Rameau, count me among your subscribers. Mademoiselle, my best regards to Signora Venosta. When I see you again, no doubt you will have become famous."

Isaura here could not control herself. She rose impulsively, and approached him, holding out her hand, and attempting a smile.

"But not famous in the way that you warned me from," she said, in whispered tones. "You are friends with me still?" It was like the piteous wail of a child seeking to make it up with one who wants to quarrel, the child knows not why.

Graham was moved, but what could he say? Could he have the right to warn her from this profession also; forbid all desires, all roads of fame to this brilliant aspirant? Even a declared and accepted lover might well have deemed that that would be to ask too much. He replied, "Yes, always a friend, if you could ever need one." Her hand slid from his, and she turned away, wounded to the quick.

"Have you your *coupé* at the door?" asked Savarin.

"Simply a *fiacre*."

"And are going back at once to Paris?"

"Yes."

"Will you kindly drop me in the Rue de Rivoli?"

"Charmed to be of use."

CHAPTER XI.

As the *fiacre* bore to Paris Savarin and Graham, the former said, "I cannot conceive what rich simpleton could entertain so high an opinion of Gustave Rameau as to select a man so young, and of reputation, though promising, so undecided, for an enterprise which requires such a degree of tact and judgment as the conduct of a new journal; and a journal, too, which is to address itself to the *beau monde*. However, it is not for me to criticise a selection which brings a god-send to myself."

"To yourself? You jest; you have a journal of your own. It can only be through an excess of good-nature that you lend your name and pen to the service of M. Gustave Rameau."

"My good-nature does not go to that extent. It is Rameau who confers a service upon me. *Peste! mon cher*, we French authors have not the rents of you rich English milords. And though I am the most economical of our tribe, yet that journal of mine has failed me of late; and this morning I did not exactly see how I was to repay a sum I had been obliged to borrow of a money-lender—for I am too proud to borrow of friends, and too sagacious to borrow of publishers—when in walks *ce cher petit* Gustave with an offer for a few trifles toward starting this new-born journal, which makes a new man of me. Now I am in the undertaking, my *amour propre* and my reputation are concerned in its success; and I shall take care that *collaborateurs* of whose company I am not ashamed are in the same boat. But that charming girl, Isaura! What an enigma the gift of the pen is! No one can ever guess who has it until tried."

"The young lady's MS., then, really merits the praise you bestowed on it?"

"Much more praise, though a great deal of blame, which I did not bestow. For in a first work faults insure success

as much as beauties. Anything better than tame correctness. Yes, her first work, to judge by what is written, must make a hit—a great hit. And that will decide her career—a singer, an actress may retire, often does when she marries an author. But once an author always an author."

"Ah! is it so? If you had a beloved daughter, Savarin, would you encourage her to be an author?"

"Frankly, no—principally because in that case the chances are that she would marry an author; and French authors, at least in the imaginative school, make very uncomfortable husbands."

"Ah! you think the Signorina will marry one of those uncomfortable husbands—M. Rameau, perhaps?"

"Rameau! *Hein!* nothing more likely. That beautiful face of his has its fascination. And to tell you the truth, my wife, who is a striking illustration of the truth that what woman wills heaven wills, is bent upon that improvement in Gustave's moral life which she thinks a union with Mademoiselle Cicogna would achieve. At all events, the fair Italian would have in Rameau a husband who would not suffer her to bury her talents under a bushel. If she succeeds as a writer (by succeeding I mean making money), he will see that her ink-bottle is never empty; and if she don't succeed as a writer, he will take care that the world shall gain an actress or a singer. For Gustave Rameau has a great taste for luxury and show; and whatever his wife can make, I will venture to say that he will manage to spend."

"I thought you had an esteem and regard for Mademoiselle Cicogna. It is Madame your wife, I suppose, who has a grudge against her?"

"On the contrary, my wife idolises her."

"Savages sacrifice to their idols the things they deem of value. Civilised Parisians sacrifice their idols themselves, —and to a thing that is worthless."

"Rameau is not worthless; he has beauty, and youth, and talent. My wife thinks more highly of him than I do; but I must respect a man who has found admirers so sincere as to set him up in a journal, and give him *carte blanche* for terms to contributors. I know of no man in Paris more valuable to me. His worth to me this morning

is 30,000 francs. I own I do not think him likely to be a very safe husband; but then French female authors and artists seldom take any husbands except upon short leases. There are no vulgar connubial prejudices in the pure atmosphere of art. Women of genius, like Madame de Grantmesnil, and perhaps like our charming young friend, resemble canary-birds—to sing their best you must separate them from their mates."

The Englishman suppressed a groan, and turned the conversation.

When he had set down his lively companion, Vane dismissed his *fiacre*, and walked to his lodgings musingly.

"No," he said inly; "I must wrench myself from the very memory of that haunting face,—the friend and pupil of Madame de Grantmesnil, the associate of Gustave Rameau, the rival of Julie Caumartin, the aspirant to that pure atmosphere of art in which there are no vulgar connubial prejudices! Could I—whether I be rich or poor—see in *her* the ideal of an English wife? As it is—as it is—with this mystery which oppresses me, which, till solved, leaves my own career insoluble,—as it is, how fortunate that I did not find her alone—did not utter the words that would fain have leapt from my heart—did not say, 'I may not be the rich man I seem, but in that case I shall be yet more ambitious, because struggle and labour are the sinews of ambition! Should I be rich, will you adorn my station? should I be poor, will you enrich poverty with your smile? And can you, in either case, forego—really, painlessly forego, as you led me to hope—the pride in your own art?' My ambition were killed did I marry an actress, a singer. Better that than the hungerer after excitements which are never allayed, the struggler in a career which admits of no retirement—the woman to whom marriage is no goal—who remains to the last the property of the public, and glories to dwell in a house of glass into which every bystander has a right to peer. Is this the ideal of an Englishman's wife and home? No, no!—woe is me, no!"

BOOK VI.

BOOK VI.

CHAPTER I.

A FEW weeks after the date of the preceding chapter, a gay party of men were assembled at supper in one of the private *salons* of the *Maison Dorée*. The supper was given by Frederic Lemercier, and the guests were, though in various ways, more or less distinguished. Rank and fashion were not unworthily represented by Alain de Rochebriant and Enguerrand de Vandemar, by whose supremacy as 'lion' Frederic still felt rather humbled, though Alain had contrived to bring them familiarly together. Art, Literature, and the Bourse had also their representatives,—in Henri Bernard, a rising young portrait-painter, whom the Emperor honoured with his patronage; the Vicomte de Brézé, and M. Savarin. Science was not altogether forgotten, but contributed its agreeable delegate in the person of the eminent physician to whom we have been before introduced—Dr. Bacourt. Doctors in Paris are not so serious as they mostly are in London; and Bacourt, a pleasant philosopher of the school of Aristippus, was no unfrequent nor ungenial guest at any banquet in which the Graces relaxed their zones. Martial glory was also represented at that social gathering by a warrior, bronzed and decorated, lately arrived from Algiers, on which arid soil he had achieved many laurels and the rank of Colonel. Finance contributed Duplessis. Well it might; for Duplessis had just assisted the host to a splendid *coup* at the Bourse.

"Ah, *cher* M. Savarin," says Enguerrand de Vandemar, whose patrician blood is so pure from revolutionary taint that he is always instinctively polite, "what a masterpiece in its way is that little paper of yours in the '*Sens Commun*,' upon the connection between the national character

and the national diet—so genuinely witty! for wit is but truth made amusing."

"You flatter me," replied Savarin, modestly; "but I own I do think there is a smattering of philosophy in that trifle. Perhaps, however, the character of a people depends more on its drinks than its food. The wines of Italy—heady, irritable, ruinous to the digestion—contribute to the character which belongs to active brains and disordered livers. The Italians conceive great plans, but they cannot digest them. The English common people drink beer, and the beerish character is stolid, rude, but stubborn and enduring. The English middle class imbibe port and sherry; and with these strong potations their ideas become obfuscated. Their character has no liveliness; amusement is not one of their wants; they sit at home after dinner and doze away the fumes of their beverage in the dulness of domesticity. If the English aristocracy are more vivacious and cosmopolitan, it is thanks to the wines of France, which it is the *mode* with them to prefer; but still, like all plagiarists, they are imitators, not inventors—they borrow our wines and copy our manners. The Germans——"

"Insolent barbarians!" growled the French Colonel, twirling his moustache; "if the Emperor were not in his dotage, their Sadowa would ere this have cost them their Rhine."

"The Germans," resumed Savarin, unheeding the interruption, "drink acrid wines, varied with beer, to which last their commonalty owes a *quasi* resemblance in stupidity and endurance to the English masses. Acrid wines rot the teeth: Germans are afflicted with toothache from infancy. All people subject to toothache are sentimental. Goethe was a martyr to toothache. Werter was written in one of those paroxysms which predispose genius to suicide. But the German character is not all toothache; beer and tobacco step in to the relief of Rhenish acridities, blend philosophy with sentiment, and give that patience in detail which distinguishes their professors and their generals. Besides, the German wines in themselves have other qualities than that of acridity. Taken with sour krout and stewed prunes, they produce fumes of self-conceit. A German has little of French vanity; he has German self-esteem. He extends the esteem of self to those around

him; his home, his village, his city, his country—all belong to him. It is a duty he owes to himself to defend them. Give him his pipe and his sabre—and, M. le Colonel, believe me, you will never take the Rhine from him."

"P-r-r," cried the Colonel; "but we have had the Rhine."

"We did not keep it. And I should not say I had a franc-piece if I borrowed it from your purse and had to give it back the next day."

Here there arose a very general hubbub of voices, all raised against M. Savarin. Enguerrand, like a man of good *ton*, hastened to change the conversation.

"Let us leave these poor wretches to their sour wines and toothaches. We drinkers of the champagne, all our own, have only pity for the rest of the human race. This new journal '*Le Sens Commun*,' has a strange title, M. Savarin."

"Yes; '*Le Sens Commun*' is not common in Paris, where we all have too much genius for a thing so vulgar."

"Pray," said the young painter, "tell me what you mean by the title—'*Le Sens Commun*.' It is mysterious."

"True," said Savarin; "it may mean the *Sensus communis* of the Latins, or the Good Sense of the English. The Latin phrase signifies the sense of the common interest; the English phrase, the sense which persons of understanding have in common. I suppose the inventor of our title meant the latter signification."

"And who was the inventor?" asked Bacourt.

"That is a secret which I do not know myself," answered Savarin.

"I guess," said Enguerrand, "that it must be the same person who writes the political leaders. They are most remarkable; for they are so unlike the articles in other journals, whether those journals be the best or the worst. For my own part, I trouble my head very little about politics, and shrug my shoulders at essays which reduce the government of flesh and blood into mathematical problems. But these articles seem to be written by a man of the world, and, as a man of the world myself, I read them."

"But," said the Vicomte de Brézé, who piqued himself

on the polish of his style, "they are certainly not the composition of any eminent writer. No eloquence, no sentiment; though I ought not to speak disparagingly of a fellow-contributor."

"All that may be very true," said Savarin, "but M. Enguerrand is right. The papers are evidently the work of a man of the world, and it is for that reason that they have startled the public, and established the success of '*Le Sens Commun.*' But wait a week or two longer, Messieurs, and then tell me what you think of a new *roman* by a new writer, which we shall announce in our impression to-morrow. I shall be disappointed, indeed, if that does not charm you. No lack of eloquence and sentiment there."

"I am rather tired of eloquence and sentiment," said Enguerrand. "Your editor, Gustave Rameau, sickens me of them with his 'Starlit Meditations in the Streets of Paris,' morbid imitations of Heine's enigmatical 'Evening Songs.' Your journal would be perfect if you could suppress the editor."

"Suppress Gustave Rameau!" cried Bernard, the painter; "I adore his poems, full of heart for poor suffering humanity."

"Suffering humanity so far as it is packed up in himself," said the physician, drily, "and a great deal of the suffering is bile. But *à propos* of your new journal, Savarin, there is a paragraph in it to-day which excites my curiosity. It says that the Vicomte de Mauléon has arrived in Paris, after many years of foreign travel; and then, referring modestly enough to the reputation for talent which he had acquired in early youth, proceeds to indulge in a prophecy of the future political career of a man who, if he have a grain of *sens commun*, must think that the less said about him the better. I remember him well; a terrible *mauvais sujet*, but superbly handsome. There was a shocking story about the jewels of a foreign duchess, which obliged him to leave Paris."

"But," said Savarin, "the paragraph you refer to hints that that story is a groundless calumny, and that the true reason for De Mauléon's voluntary self-exile was a very common one among young Parisians—he had lavished away his fortune. He returns, when, either by heritage

or his own exertions, he has secured elsewhere a competence."

"Nevertheless I cannot think that society will receive him," said Bacourt. "When he left Paris, there was one joyous sigh of relief among all men who wished to avoid duels, and keep their wives out of temptation. Society may welcome back a lost sheep, but not a re-invigorated wolf."

"I beg your pardon, *mon cher*," said Enguerrand; "society has already opened its fold to this poor ill-treated wolf. Two days ago Louvier summoned to his house the surviving relations or connections of De Mauléon—among whom are the Marquis de Rochebriant, the Counts de Passy, De Beauvilliers, De Chavigny, my father, and of course his two sons—and submitted to us the proofs which completely clear the Vicomte de Mauléon of even a suspicion of fraud or dishonour in the affair of the jewels. The proofs include the written attestation of the Duke himself, and letters from that nobleman after De Mauléon's disappearance from Paris, expressive of great esteem, and, indeed, of great admiration, for the Vicomte's sense of honour and generosity of character. The result of this family council was, that we all went in a body to call on De Mauléon. And he dined with my father that same day. You know enough of the Count de Vandemar, and, I may add, of my mother, to be sure that they are both, in their several ways, too regardful of social conventions to lend their countenance even to a relation without well weighing the *pros* and *cons*. And as for Raoul, Bayard himself could not be a greater stickler on the point of honour."

This declaration was followed by a silence that had the character of stupor.

At last Duplessis said, "But what has Louvier to do in this *galère?* Louvier is no relation of that well-born *vaurien;* why should *he* summon your family council?"

"Louvier excused his interference on the ground of early and intimate friendship with De Mauléon, who, he said, came to consult him on arriving at Paris, and who felt too proud or too timid to address relations with whom he had long dropped all intercourse. An intermediary was required, and Louvier volunteered to take that part on himself; nothing more natural, nor more simple. By the way,

Alain, you dine with Louvier to-morrow, do you not?—a dinner in honour of our rehabilitated kinsman. I and Raoul go."

"Yes, I shall be charmed to meet again a man who, whatever might be his errors in youth, on which," added Alain, slightly colouring, "it certainly does not become me to be severe, must have suffered the most poignant anguish a man of honour can undergo—viz., honour suspected; and who now, whether by years or sorrow, is so changed that I cannot recognise a likeness to the character I have just heard given to him as *mauvais sujet* and *vaurien*."

"Bravo!" cried Enguerrand; "all honour to courage—and at Paris it requires great courage to defend the absent."

"Nay," answered Alain in a low voice. "The *gentilhomme* who will not defend another *gentilhomme* traduced, would, as a soldier, betray a citadel and desert a flag."

"You say M. de Mauléon is changed," said De Brézé; "yes, he must be growing old. No trace left of his good looks?"

"Pardon me," said Enguerrand, "he is *bien conservé*, and has still a very handsome head and an imposing presence. But one cannot help doubting whether he deserved the formidable reputation he acquired in youth; his manner is so singularly mild and gentle, his conversation so winningly modest, so void of pretence, and his mode of life is as simple as that of a Spanish hidalgo."

"He does not, then, affect the *rôle* of Monte Christo," said Duplessis, "and buy himself into notice like that hero of romance?"

"Certainly not: he says very frankly that he has but a very small income, but more than enough for his wants—richer than in his youth; for he has learned content. We may dismiss the hint in '*Le Sens Commun*' about his future political career: at least he evinces no such ambition."

"How could he as a Legitimist?" said Alain, bitterly. "What department would elect him?"

"But is he a Legitimist?" asked De Brézé.

"I take it for granted that he must be that," answered Alain, haughtily, "for he is a De Mauléon."

"His father was as good a De Mauléon as himself, I

presume," rejoined De Brézé, drily; "and he enjoyed a place at the Court of Louis Philippe, which a Legitimist could scarcely accept. Victor did not, I fancy, trouble his head about politics at all, at the time I remember him; but to judge by his chief associates, and the notice he received from the Princes of the House of Orleans, I should guess that he had no predilections in favour of Henri V."

"I should regret to think so," said Alain, yet more haughtily, "since the De Mauléons acknowledge the head of their house in the representative of the Rochebriants."

"At all events," said Duplessis, "M. de Maulćon appears to be a philosopher of rare stamp. A Parisian who has known riches and is contented to be poor, is a phenomenon I should like to study."

"You have that chance to-morrow evening, M. Duplessis," said Enguerrand.

"What! at M. Louvier's dinner? Nay, I have no other acquaintance with M. Louvier than that of the Bourse, and the acquaintance is not cordial."

"I did not mean at M. Louvier's dinner, but at the Duchesse de Tarascon's ball. You, as one of her special favourites, will doubtless honour her *réunion*."

"Yes; I have promised my daughter to go to the ball. But the Duchesse is Imperialist. M. de Maulćon seems to be either a Legitimist, according to M. le Marquis, or an Orleanist, according to our friend De Brézé."

"What of that? Can there be a more loyal Bourbonite than De Rochebriant? and *he* goes to the ball. It is given out of the season, in celebration of a family marriage. And the Duchesse de Tarascon is connected with Alain, and therefore with De Mauléon, though but distantly."

"Ah! excuse my ignorance of genealogy."

"As if the genealogy of noble names were not the history of France," muttered Alain, indignantly.

CHAPTER II.

YES, the "*Sens Commun*" was a success: it had made a sensation at starting; the sensation was on the increase. It is difficult for an Englishman to comprehend the full influence of a successful journal at Paris; the station—political, literary, social—which it confers on the contributors who effect the success. M. Lebeau had shown much more sagacity in selecting Gustave Rameau for the nominal editor than Savarin supposed or my reader might detect. In the first place, Gustave himself, with all his defects of information and solidity of intellect, was not without real genius; and a sort of genius that when kept in restraint, and its field confined to sentiment or sarcasm, was in unison with the temper of the day: in the second place, it was only through Gustave that Lebeau could have got at Savarin; and the names which that brilliant writer had secured at the outset would have sufficed to draw attention to the earliest numbers of the "*Sens Commun*," despite a title which did not seem alluring. But these names alone could not have sufficed to circulate the new journal to the extent it had already reached. This was due to the curiosity excited by leading articles of a style new to the Parisian public, and of which the authorship defied conjecture. They were signed Pierre Firmin—supposed to be a *nom de plume*, as that name was utterly unknown in the world of letters. They affected the tone of an impartial observer; they neither espoused nor attacked any particular party; they laid down no abstract doctrines of government. But somehow or other, in language terse yet familiar, sometimes careless yet never vulgar, they expressed a prevailing sentiment of uneasy discontent, a foreboding of some destined change in things established, without defining the nature of such change, without saying whether it would be for good or for evil. In his criticisms upon individuals, the

writer was guarded and moderate—the keenest-eyed censor of the press could not have found a pretext for interference with expression of opinions so polite. Of the Emperor these articles spoke little, but that little was not disrespectful; yet, day after day, the articles contributed to sap the Empire. All malcontents of every shade comprehended, as by a secret of freemasonry, that in this journal they had an ally. Against religion not a word was uttered, yet the enemies of religion bought that journal; still, the friends of religion bought it too, for those articles treated with irony the philosophers on paper who thought that their contradictory crotchets could fuse themselves into any single Utopia, or that any social edifice, hurriedly run up by the crazy few, could become a permanent habitation for the turbulent many, without the clamps of a creed.

The tone of these articles always corresponded with the title of the journal—"*Common-sense.*" It was to common-sense that it appealed—appealed in the utterance of a man who disdained the subtle theories, the vehement declamation, the credulous beliefs, or the inflated bombast, which constitute so large a portion of the Parisian press. The articles rather resembled certain organs of the English press, which profess to be blinded by no enthusiasm for anybody or anything, which find their sale in that sympathy with ill-nature to which Huet ascribes the popularity of Tacitus, and, always quietly undermining institutions with a covert sneer, never pretend to a spirit of imagination so at variance with common-sense as a conjecture how the institutions should be rebuilt or replaced.

Well, somehow or other the journal, as I was saying, hit the taste of the Parisian public. It intimated, with the easy grace of an unpremeditated agreeable talker, that French society in all its classes was rotten, and each class was willing to believe that all the others were rotten, and agreed that unless the others were reformed, there was something very unsound in itself.

The ball at the Duchesse de Tarascon's was a brilliant event. The summer was far advanced; many of the Parisian holiday-makers had returned to the capital, but the season had not commenced, and a ball at that time of year was a very unwonted event. But there was a special occasion for this *fête*—a marriage between a niece

of the Duchesse and the son of a great official in high favour at the Imperial Court.

The dinner at Louvier's broke up early, and the music for the second waltz was sounding when Enguerrand, Alain, and the Vicomte de Mauléon ascended the stairs. Raoul did not accompany them; he went very rarely to any balls —never to one given by an Imperialist, however nearly related to him the Imperialist might be. But, in the sweet indulgence of his good nature, he had no blame for those who did go—not for Enguerrand, still less, of course, for Alain.

Something, too, might well here be said as to his feeling towards Victor de Mauléon. He had joined in the family acquittal of that kinsman as to the grave charge of the jewels; the proofs of innocence thereon seemed to him unequivocal and decisive, therefore he had called on the Vicomte and acquiesced in all formal civilities shown to him. But, such acts of justice to a fellow-*gentilhomme* and a kinsman duly performed, he desired to see as little as possible of the Vicomte de Mauléon. He reasoned thus: "Of every charge which society made against this man he is guiltless. But of all the claims to admiration which society accorded to him, before it erroneously condemned, there are none which make me covet his friendship, or suffice to dispel doubts as to what he may be when society once more receives him. And the man is so captivating that I should dread his influence over myself did I see much of him."

Raoul kept his reasonings to himself, for he had that sort of charity which indisposes an amiable man to be severe on bygone offences. In the eyes of Enguerrand and Alain, and such young votaries of the *mode* as they could influence, Victor de Mauléon assumed almost heroic proportions. In the affair which had inflicted on him a calumny so odious, it was clear that he had acted with chivalrous delicacy of honour. And the turbulence and recklessness of his earlier years, redeemed as they were, in the traditions of his contemporaries, by courage and generosity, were not offences to which young Frenchmen are inclined to be harsh. All question as to the mode in which his life might have been passed during his long absence from the capital, was merged in the respect due to the

only facts known, and these were clearly proved in his *pièces justificatives*. 1st, That he had served under another name in the ranks of the army in Algiers; had distinguished himself there for signal valour, and received, with promotion, the decoration of the cross. His real name was known only to his colonel, and on quitting the service, the colonel placed in his hands a letter of warm eulogy on his conduct, and identifying him as Victor de Mauléon. 2ndly, That in California he had saved a wealthy family from midnight murder, fighting single-handed against and overmastering three ruffians, and declining all other reward from those he had preserved than a written attestation of their gratitude. In all countries, valour ranks high in the list of virtues; in no country does it so absolve from vices as it does in France.

But as yet Victor de Mauléon's vindication was only known by a few, and those belonging to the gayer circles of life. How he might be judged by the sober middle class, which constitutes the most important section of public opinion to a candidate for political trusts and distinctions, was another question.

The Duchesse stood at the door to receive her visitors. Duplessis was seated near the entrance, by the side of a distinguished member of the Imperial Government, with whom he was carrying on a whispered conversation. The eye of the financier, however, turned towards the doorway as Alain and Enguerrand entered, and passing over their familiar faces, fixed itself attentively on that of a much older man whom Enguerrand was presenting to the Duchesse, and in whom Duplessis rightly divined the Vicomte de Mauléon. Certainly if no one could have recognised M. Lebeau in the stately personage who had visited Louvier, still less could one who had heard of the wild feats of the *roi des viveurs* in his youth reconcile belief in such tales with the quiet modesty of mien which distinguished the cavalier now replying, with bended head and subdued accents, to the courteous welcome of the brilliant hostess. But for such difference in attributes between the past and the present De Mauléon, Duplessis had been prepared by the conversation at the *Maison Dorée*. And now, as the Vicomte, yielding his place by the Duchesse to some newcomer, glided on, and, leaning against a column, contem-

plated the gay scene before him with that expression of countenance, half sarcastic, half mournful, with which men regard, after long estrangement, the scenes of departed joys, Duplessis felt that no change in that man had impaired the force of character which had made him the hero of reckless coevals. Though wearing no beard, not even a moustache, there was something emphatically masculine in the contour of the close-shaven cheek and resolute jaw, in a forehead broad at the temples, and protuberant in those organs over the eyebrows which are said to be significant of quick perception and ready action; in the lips, when in repose compressed, perhaps somewhat stern in their expression, but pliant and mobile when speaking, and wonderfully fascinating when they smiled. Altogether, about this Victor de Maulĕon there was a nameless distinction, apart from that of conventional elegance. You would have said, "That is a man of some marked individuality, an eminence of some kind in himself." You would not be surprised to hear that he was a party-leader, a skilled diplomatist, a daring soldier, an adventurous traveller; but you would not guess him to be a student, an author, an artist.

While Duplessis thus observed the Vicomte de Maulĕon, all the while seeming to lend an attentive ear to the whispered voice of the Minister by his side, Alain passed on into the ball-room. He was fresh enough to feel the exhilaration of the dance. Enguerrand (who had survived that excitement, and who habitually deserted any assembly at an early hour for the cigar and whist of his club) had made his way to De Maulĕon, and there stationed himself. The lion of one generation has always a mixed feeling of curiosity and respect for the lion of a generation before him, and the young Vandemar had conceived a strong and almost an affectionate interest in this discrowned king of that realm in fashion which, once lost, is never to be regained; for it is only Youth that can hold its sceptre and command its subjects.

"In this crowd, Vicomte," said Enguerrand, "there must be many old acquaintances of yours?"

"Perhaps so, but as yet I have only seen new faces."

As he thus spoke, a middle-aged man, decorated with

the grand cross of the Legion and half-a-dozen foreign orders, lending his arm to a lady of the same age radiant in diamonds, passed by towards the ball-room, and in some sudden swerve of his person, occasioned by a pause of his companion to adjust her train, he accidentally brushed against De Mauléon, whom he had not before noticed. Turning round to apologise for his awkwardness, he encountered the full gaze of the Vicomte, started, changed countenance, and hurried on his companion.

"Do you not recognise his Excellency?" said Enguerrand, smiling. "His cannot be a new face to you."

"Is it the Baron de Lacy?" asked De Mauléon.

"The Baron de Lacy, now Count d'Epinay, ambassador at the Court of ——, and, if report speak true, likely soon to exchange that post for the *porte feuille* of Minister."

"He has got on in life since I saw him last, the little Baron. He was then my devoted imitator, and I was not proud of the imitation."

"He has got on by always clinging to the skirts of some one stronger than himself—to yours, I daresay, when, being a *parvenu* despite his usurped title of Baron, he aspired to the *entrée* into clubs and *salons*. The *entrée* thus obtained, the rest followed easily: he became a *milllionnaire* through a wife's *dot*, and an ambassador through the wife's lover, who is a power in the state."

"But he must have substance in himself. Empty bags cannot be made to stand upright. Ah! unless I mistake, I see some one I knew better. Yon pale, thin man, also with the grand cross,—surely that is Alfred Hennequin. Is he too a decorated Imperialist? I left him a socialistic republican."

"But, I presume, even then an eloquent *avocat*. He got into the Chamber, spoke well, defended the *coup-d'état*. He has just been made *Préfet* of the great department of the ——, a popular appointment. He bears a high character. Pray renew your acquaintance with him; he is coming this way."

"Will so grave a dignitary renew acquaintance with me? I doubt it."

But as De Mauléon said this, he moved from the column, and advanced towards the *Préfet*. Enguerrand followed him, and saw the Vicomte extend his hand to his old

acquaintance. The *Préfet* stared, and said, with frigid courtesy, "Pardon me,—some mistake."

"Allow me, M. Hennequin," said Enguerrand, interposing, and wishing good-naturedly to save De Mauléon the awkwardness of introducing himself,—"allow me to re-introduce you to my kinsman, whom the lapse of years may well excuse you for forgetting, the Vicomte de Mauléon."

Still the *Préfet* did not accept the hand. He bowed with formal ceremony, said, "I was not aware that M. le Vicomte had returned to Paris," and, moving to the doorway, made his salutation to the hostess and disappeared.

"The insolent!" muttered Enguerrand.

"Hush!" said De Mauléon, quietly, "I can fight no more duels—especially with a *Préfet*. But I own I am weak enough to feel hurt at such a reception from Hennequin, for he owed me some obligations—small, perhaps, but still they were such as might have made me select him, rather than Louvier, as the vindicator of my name, had I known him to be so high placed. But a man who has raised himself into an authority may well be excused for forgetting a friend whose character needs defence. I forgive him."

There was something pathetic in the Vicomte's tone which touched Enguerrand's warm if light heart. But De Mauléon did not allow him time to answer. He went on quickly through an opening in the gay crowd, which immediately closed behind him, and Enguerrand saw him no more that evening.

Duplessis ere this had quitted his seat by the Minister, drawn thence by a young and very pretty girl resigned to his charge by a cavalier with whom she had been dancing. She was the only daughter of Duplessis, and he valued her even more than the millions he had made at the Bourse. "The Princess," she said, "has been swept off in the train of some German Royalty; so, *petit père*, I must impose myself on thee."

The Princess, a Russian of high rank, was the *chaperon* that evening of Mademoiselle Valérie Duplessis.

"And I suppose I must take thee back into the ball-room," said the financier, smiling proudly, "and find thee partners."

"I don't want your aid for that, Monsieur; except this quadrille, my list is pretty well filled up."

"And I hope the partners will be pleasant. Let me know who they are," he whispered, as they threaded their way into the ball-room.

The girl glanced at her tablet.

"Well, the first on the list is milord somebody, with an unpronounceable English name."

"Beau cavalier?"

"No; ugly, old too—thirty at least."

Duplessis felt relieved. He did not wish his daughter to fall in love with an Englishman.

"And the next?"

"The next," she said, hesitatingly, and he observed that a soft blush accompanied the hesitation.

"Yes, the next. Not English too?"

"Oh no, the Marquis de Rochebriant."

"Ah, who presented him to thee?"

"Thy friend, *petit père*, M. de Brézé."

Duplessis again glanced at his daughter's face; it was bent over her bouquet.

"Is he ugly also?"

"Ugly!" exclaimed the girl, indignantly; "why, he is ——" she checked herself and turned away her head.

Duplessis became thoughtful. He was glad that he had accompanied his child into the ball-room; he would stay there, and keep watch on her and Rochebriant also.

Up to that moment he had felt a dislike to Rochebriant. That young noble's too obvious pride of race had nettled him, not the less that the financier himself was vain of his ancestry. Perhaps he still disliked Alain, but the dislike was now accompanied with a certain, not hostile, interest; and if he became connected with the race, the pride in it might grow contagious.

They had not been long in the ball room before Alain came up to claim his promised partner. In saluting Duplessis, his manner was the same as usual—not more cordial, not less ceremoniously distant. A man so able as the financier cannot be without quick knowledge of the human heart.

"If disposed to fall in love with Valérie," thought Duplessis, "he would have taken more pains to please her

father. Well, thank heaven, there are better matches to be found for her than a noble without fortune, and a Legitimist without career."

In fact, Alain felt no more for Valérie than for any other pretty girl in the room. In talking with the Vicomte de Brézé in the intervals of the dance, he had made some passing remark on her beauty; De Brézé had said, "Yes, she is charming; I will present you," and hastened to do so before Rochebriant even learned her name. So introduced, he could but invite her to give him her first disengaged dance, and when that was fixed, he had retired, without entering into conversation.

Now, as they took their places in the quadrille, he felt that effort of speech had become a duty, if not a pleasure; and, of course, he began with the first commonplace which presented itself to his mind.

"Do you not think it a very pleasant ball, Mademoiselle?"

"Yes," dropped, in almost inaudible reply, from Valérie's rosy lips.

"And not over-crowded, as most balls are?"

Valérie's lips again moved, but this time quite inaudibly.

The obligations of the figure now caused a pause. Alain racked his brains, and began—

"They tell me the last season was more than usually gay; of that I cannot judge, for it was wellnigh over when I came to Paris for the first time."

Valérie looked up with a more animated expression than her childlike face had yet shown, and said, this time distinctly, "This is my first ball, Monsieur le Marquis."

"One has only to look at Mademoiselle to divine that fact," replied Alain, gallantly.

Again the conversation was interrupted by the dance, but the ice between the two was now broken. And when the quadrille was concluded, and Rochebriant led the fair Valérie back to her father's side, she felt as if she had been listening to the music of the spheres, and that the music had now suddenly stopped. Alain, alas for her! was under no such pleasing illusion. Her talk had seemed to him artless indeed, but very insipid, compared with the brilliant conversation of the wedded *Parisiennes* with whom he more habitually danced; and it was with rather a sensation of

relief that he made his parting bow, and receded into the crowd of bystanders.

Meanwhile De Maulĕon had quitted the assemblage, walking slowly through the deserted streets towards his apartment. The civilities he had met at Louvier's dinner-party, and the marked distinction paid to him by kinsmen of rank and position so unequivocal as Alain and Enguerrand, had softened his mood and cheered his spirits. He had begun to question himself whether a fair opening to his political ambition was really forbidden to him under the existent order of things, whether it necessitated the employment of such dangerous tools as those to which anger and despair had reconciled his intellect. But the pointed way in which he had been shunned or slighted by the two men who belonged to political life—to men who in youth had looked up to himself, and whose dazzling career of honours was identified with the Imperial system—reanimated his fiercer passions and his more perilous designs. The frigid accost of Hennequin more especially galled him; it wounded not only his pride but his heart; it had the venom of ingratitude, and it is the peculiar privilege of ingratitude to wound hearts that have learned to harden themselves to the hate or contempt of men to whom no services have been rendered. In some private affair concerning his property, De Maulĕon had had occasion to consult Hennequin, then a rising young *avocat*. Out of that consultation a friendship had sprung up, despite the differing habits and social grades of the two men. One day, calling on Hennequin, he found him in a state of great nervous excitement. The *avocat* had received a public insult in the *salon* of a noble, to whom De Maulĕon had introduced him, from a man who pretended to the hand of a young lady to whom Hennequin was attached, and indeed almost affianced. The man was a notorious *spadassin*—a duellist little less renowned for skill in all weapons than De Maulĕon himself. The affair had been such, that Hennequin's friends assured him he had no choice but to challenge this bravo. Hennequin, brave enough at the bar, was no hero before sword-point or pistol. He was utterly ignorant of the use of either weapon; his death in the encounter with an antagonist so formidable seemed to him certain, and life was so precious; an honourable and distinguished career opening before him, marriage

with the woman he loved: still he had the Frenchman's point of honour. He had been told that he must fight; well, then, he must. He asked De Mauléon to be one of his seconds, and in asking him, sank in his chair, covered his face with his hands, and burst into tears.

"Wait till to-morrow," said De Mauléon; "take no step till then. Meanwhile, you are in my hands, and I answer for your honour."

On leaving Hennequin, Victor sought the *spadassin* at the club of which they were both members, and contrived without reference to Hennequin, to pick a quarrel with him. A challenge ensued; a duel with swords took place the next morning. De Mauléon disarmed and wounded his antagonist, not gravely, but sufficiently to terminate the encounter. He assisted to convey the wounded man to his apartment, and planted himself by his bedside, as if he were a friend.

"Why on earth did you fasten a quarrel on me?" asked the *spadassin;* "and why, having done so, did you spare my life; for your sword was at my heart when you shifted its point, and pierced my shoulder?"

"I will tell you, and in so doing, beg you to accept my friendship hereafter, on one condition. In the course of the day, write or dictate a few civil words of apology to M. Hennequin. *Ma foi!* every one will praise you for a generosity so becoming in a man who has given such proofs of courage and skill, to an *avocat* who has never handled a sword nor fired a pistol."

That same day De Mauléon remitted to Hennequin an apology for heated words freely retracted, which satisfied all his friends. For the service thus rendered by De Mauléon, Hennequin declared himself everlastingly indebted. In fact, he entirely owed to that friend his life, his marriage, his honour, his career.

"And now," thought De Mauléon, "now, when he could so easily requite me,—now he will not even take my hand. Is human nature itself at war with me?"

CHAPTER III.

NOTHING could be simpler than the apartment of the Vicomte de Maulèon, in the second story of a quiet old-fashioned street. It had been furnished at small cost out of his savings. Yet, on the whole, it evinced the good taste of a man who had once been among the exquisites of the polite world.

You felt that you were in the apartment of a gentleman, and a gentleman of somewhat severe tastes, and of sober matured years. He was sitting the next morning in the room which he used as a private study. Along the walls were arranged dwarf bookcases, as yet occupied by few books, most of them books of reference, others cheap editions of the French classics in prose—no poets, no romance-writers,—with a few Latin authors also in prose—Cicero, Sallust, Tacitus. He was engaged at his desk writing—a book with its leaves open before him, "Paul Louis Courier," that model of political irony and masculine style of composition. There was a ring at his door-bell. The Vicomte kept no servant. He rose and answered the summons. He recoiled a few paces on recognising his visitor in M. Hennequin.

The *Préfet* this time did not withdraw his hand; he extended it, but it was with a certain awkwardness and timidity.

"I thought it my duty to call on you, Vicomte, thus early, having already seen M. Enguerrand de Vandemar. He has shown me the copies of the *pièces* which were inspected by your distinguished kinsmen, and which completely clear you of the charge that, grant me your pardon when I say, seemed to me still to remain unanswered when I had the honour to meet you last night."

"It appears to me, M. Hennequin, that you, as an *avocat* so eminent, might have convinced yourself very readily of that fact."

"M. le Vicomte, I was in Switzerland with my wife

at the time of the unfortunate affair in which you were involved."

"But when you returned to Paris, you might perhaps have deigned to make inquiries so affecting the honour of one you had called a friend, and for whom you had professed"—De Mauléon paused; he disdained to add—"an eternal gratitude."

Hennequin coloured slightly, but replied with self-possession.

"I certainly did inquire. I did hear that the charge against you with regard to the abstraction of the jewels was withdrawn—that you were therefore acquitted by law; but I heard also that society did not acquit you, and that, finding this, you had quitted France. Pardon me again, no one would listen to me when I attempted to speak on your behalf. But now that so many years have elapsed, that the story is imperfectly remembered—that relations so high-placed receive you so cordially,—now, I rejoice to think that you will have no difficulty in regaining a social position never really lost, but for a time resigned."

"I am duly sensible of the friendly joy you express. I was reading the other day in a lively author some pleasant remarks on the effects of *médisance* or calumny upon our impressionable Parisian public. 'If,' says the writer, 'I found myself accused of having put the two towers of Notre Dame into my waistcoat-pocket, I should not dream of defending myself; I should take to flight. And,' adds the writer, 'if my best friend were under the same accusation, I should be so afraid of being considered his accomplice that I should put my best friend outside the door.' Perhaps, M. Hennequin, I was seized with the first alarm. Why should I blame you if seized with the second? Happily, this good city of Paris has its reactions. And you can now offer me your hand. Paris has by this time discovered that the two towers of Notre Dame are not in my pocket."

There was a pause. De Mauléon had resettled himself at his desk, bending over his papers, and his manner seemed to imply that he considered the conversation at an end.

But a pang of shame, of remorse, of tender remembrance, shot across the heart of the decorous, worldly, self-seeking man, who owed all that he now was to the *ci-devant vaurien* before him. Again he stretched forth his hand, and this

time grasped De Maulĕon's warmly. "Forgive me," he said, feelingly and hoarsely; "forgive me. I was to blame. By character, and perhaps by the necessities of my career, I am over-timid to public opinion, public scandal—forgive me. Say if in anything now I can requite, though but slightly, the service I owe you."

De Maulĕon looked steadily at the *Préfet*, and said slowly, "Would you serve me in turn? are you sincere?"

The *Préfet* hesitated a moment, then answered firmly, "Yes."

"Well, then, what I ask of you is a frank opinion—not as lawyer, not as *Préfet*, but as a man who knows the present state of French society. Give that opinion without respect to my feelings one way or other. Let it emanate solely from your practised judgment."

"Be it so," said Hennequin, wondering what was to come.

De Maulĕon resumed—

"As you may remember, during my former career I had no political ambition. I did not meddle with politics. In the troubled times that immediately succeeded the fall of Louis Philippe I was but an epicurean looker-on. Grant that, so far as admission to the *salons* are concerned, I shall encounter no difficulty in regaining position. But as regards the Chamber, public life, a political career—can I have my fair opening under the Empire? You pause. Answer as you have promised, frankly."

"The difficulties in the way of a political career would be very great."

"Insuperable."

"I fear so. Of course, in my capacity of *Préfet*, I have no small influence in my department in support of a Government candidate. But I do not think that the Imperial Government could, at this time especially, in which it must be very cautious in selecting its candidates, be induced to recommend you. The affair of the jewels would be raked up—your vindication disputed, denied—the fact that for so many years you have acquiesced in that charge without taking steps to refute it—your antecedents, even apart from that charge—your present want of property (M. Guerrand tells me your income is but moderate)—the absence of all previous repute in public life. No; relinquish the idea of political contest—it would expose you to inevi-

table mortifications, to a failure that would even jeopardise the admission to the *salons* which you are now gaining. You could not be a Government candidate."

"Granted. I may have no desire to be one; but an opposition candidate, one of the Liberal party?"

"As an Imperialist," said Hennequin, smiling gravely, "and holding the office I do, it would not become me to encourage a candidate against the Emperor's Government. But speaking with the frankness you solicit, I should say that your chances there are infinitely worse. The opposition are in a pitiful minority—the most eminent of the Liberals can scarcely gain seats for themselves; great local popularity or property, high established repute for established patriotism, or proved talents of oratory and statesmanship, are essential qualifications for a seat in the opposition, and even these do not suffice for a third of the persons who possess them. Be again what you were before, the hero of *salons* remote from the turbulent vulgarity of politics."

"I am answered. Thank you once more. The service I rendered you once is requited now."

"No, indeed—no; but will you dine with me quietly to-day, and allow me to present to you my wife and two children, born since we parted? I say to-day, for to-morrow I return to my *Préfecture*."

"I am infinitely obliged by your invitation, but to-day I dine with the Count de Beauvilliers to meet some of the *Corps Diplomatique*. I must make good my place in the *salons*, since you so clearly show me that I have no chance of one in the Legislature—unless——"

"Unless what?"

"Unless there happen one of those revolutions in which the scum comes uppermost."

"No fear of that. The subterranean barracks and railway have ended for ever the rise of the scum—the reign of the *canaille* and its barricades."

"Adieu, my dear Hennequin. My respectful *hommages à Madame*."

After that day the writing of Pierre Firmin in "*Le Sens Commun*," though still keeping within the pale of the law, became more decidedly hostile to the Imperial system, still without committing their author to any definite programme of the sort of government that should succeed it.

CHAPTER IV.

The weeks glided on. Isaura's MS. had passed into print; it came out in the French fashion of *feuilletons*—a small detachment at a time. A previous flourish of trumpets by Savarin and the clique at his command insured it attention, if not from the general public, at least from critical and literary coteries. Before the fourth instalment appeared it had outgrown the patronage of the coteries; it seized hold of the public. It was not in the last school in fashion; incidents were not crowded and violent—they were few and simple, rather appertaining to an elder school, in which poetry of sentiment and grace of diction prevailed. That very resemblance to old favourites gave it the attraction of novelty. In a word, it excited a pleased admiration, and great curiosity was felt as to the authorship. When it oozed out that it was by the young lady whose future success in the musical world had been so sanguinely predicted by all who had heard her sing, the interest wonderfully increased. Petitions to be introduced to her acquaintance were showered upon Savarin: before she scarcely realised her dawning fame, she was drawn from her quiet home and retired habits; she was *fêtée* and courted in the literary circle of which Savarin was a chief. That circle touched, on one side, Bohemia; on the other, that realm of polite fashion which, in every intellectual metropolis, but especially in Paris, seeks to gain borrowed light from luminaries in art and letters. But the very admiration she obtained somewhat depressed, somewhat troubled her; after all, it did not differ from that which was at her command as a singer.

On the one hand, she shrank instinctively from the caresses of female authors and the familiar greetings of male authors, who frankly lived in philosophical disdain of the conventions respected by sober, decorous mortals. On the other hand, in the civilities of those who, while they courted a rising celebrity, still held their habitual existence apart from the artistic world, there was a certain air of

condescension, of patronage towards the young stranger with no other protector but Signora Venosta, the *ci-devant* public singer, and who had made her *dêbut* in a journal edited by M. Gustave Rameau, which, however disguised by exaggerated terms of praise, wounded her pride of woman in flattering her vanity as author. Among this latter set were wealthy, high-born men, who addressed her as woman—as woman beautiful and young—with words of gallantry that implied love, but certainly no thought of marriage: many of the most ardent were indeed married already. But once launched into the thick of Parisian hospitalities, it was difficult to draw back. The Venosta wept at the thought of missing some lively *soirée*, and Savarin laughed at her shrinking fastidiousness as that of a child's ignorance of the world. But still she had her mornings to herself; and in those mornings, devoted to the continuance of her work (for the commencement was in print before a third was completed), she forgot the common-place world that received her in the evenings. Insensibly to herself the tone of this work had changed as it proceeded. It had begun seriously, indeed, but in the seriousness there was a certain latent joy. It might be the joy of having found vent of utterance; it might be rather a joy still more latent, inspired by the remembrance of Graham's words and looks, and by the thought that she had renounced all idea of the professional career which he had evidently disapproved. Life then seemed to her a bright possession. We have seen that she had begun her *roman* without planning how it should end. She had, however, then meant it to end, somehow or other, happily. Now the lustre had gone from life—the tone of the work was saddened—it foreboded a tragic close. But for the general reader it became, with every chapter, still more interesting; the poor child had a singularly musical gift of style—a music which lent itself naturally to pathos. Every very young writer knows how his work, if one of feeling, will colour itself from the views of some truth in his innermost self; and in proportion as it does so, how his absorption in the work increases, till it becomes part and parcel of his own mind and heart. The presence of a hidden sorrow may change the fate of the beings he has created, and guide to the grave those whom, in a happier vein, he would have united at the altar. It is not till a

later stage of experience and art that the writer escapes from the influence of his individual personality, and lives in existences that take no colourings from his own. Genius usually must pass through the subjective process before it gains the objective. Even a Shakespeare represents himself in the Sonnets before no trace of himself is visible in a Falstaff or a Lear.

No news of the Englishman—not a word. Isaura could not but feel that in his words, his looks, that day in her own garden, and those yet happier days at Enghien, there had been more than friendship: there had been love—love enough to justify her own pride in whispering to herself, "And I love too." But then that last parting! how changed he was—how cold! She conjectured that jealousy of Ramean might, in some degree, account for the coldness when he first entered the room, but surely not when he left; surely not when she had overpassed the reserve of her sex, and implied by signs rarely misconstrued by those who love, that he had no cause for jealousy of another. Yet he had gone—parted with her pointedly as a friend, a mere friend. How foolish she had been to think this rich ambitious foreigner could ever have meant to be more! In the occupation of her work she thought to banish his image; but in that work the image was never absent; there were passages in which she pleadingly addressed it, and then would cease abruptly, stifled by passionate tears. Still she fancied that the work would reunite them; that in its pages he would hear her voice and comprehend her heart. And thus all praise of the work became very, very dear to her.

At last, after many weeks, Savarin heard from Graham. The letter was dated Aix-la-Chapelle, at which the Englishman said he might yet be some time detained. In the letter Graham spoke chiefly of the new journal: in polite compliment of Savarin's own effusions; in mixed praise and condemnation of the political and social articles signed Pierre Firmin—praise of their intellectual power, condemnation of their moral cynicism. "The writer," he said, "reminds me of a passage in which Montesquieu compares the heathen philosophers to those plants which the earth produces in places that have never seen the heavens. The soil of his experience does not grow a single

belief; and as no community can exist without a belief of some kind, so a politician without belief can but help to destroy; he cannot reconstruct. Such writers corrupt a society; they do not reform a system." He closed his letter with a reference to Isaura: "Do, in your reply, my dear Savarin, tell me something about your friends Signora Venosta and the Signorina, whose work, so far as yet published, I have read with admiring astonishment at the power of a female writer so young to rival the veteran practitioners of fiction in the creation of interest in imaginary characters, and in sentiments which, if they appear somewhat over-romantic and exaggerated, still touch very fine chords in human nature not awakened in our trite everyday existence. I presume that the beauty of the *roman* has been duly appreciated by a public so refined as the Parisian, and that the name of the author is generally known. No doubt she is now much the rage of the literary circles, and her career as a writer may be considered fixed. Pray present my congratulations to the Signorina when you see her."

Savarin had been in receipt of this letter some days before he called on Isaura, and carelessly showed it to her. She took it to the window to read, in order to conceal the trembling of her hands. In a few minutes she returned it silently.

"Those Englishmen," said Savarin, "have not the heart of compliment. I am by no means flattered by what he says of my trifles, and I daresay you are still less pleased with this chilly praise of your charming tale; but the man means to be civil."

"Certainly," said Isaura, smiling faintly.

"Only think of Rameau," resumed Savarin; "on the strength of his salary in the '*Sens Commun*,' and on the *châteaux en Espagne* which he constructs thereon—he has already furnished an apartment in the Chaussée d'Antin, and talks of setting up a *coupé* in order to maintain the dignity of letters when he goes to dine with the duchesses who are some day or other to invite him. Yet I admire his self-confidence, though I laugh at it. A man gets on by a spring in his own mechanism, and he should always keep it wound up. Rameau will make a figure. I used to pity him. I begin to respect; nothing succeeds like suc-

cess But I see I am spoiling your morning. *Au revoir, mon enfant.*"

Left alone, Isaura brooded in a sort of mournful wonderment over the words referring to herself in Graham's letter. Read though but once, she knew them by heart. What! did he consider those characters she had represented, as wholly imaginary? In one—the most prominent, the most attractive—could he detect no likeness to himself? What! did he consider so "over-romantic and exaggerated"—sentiments which couched appeals from her heart to his? Alas! in matters of sentiment it is the misfortune of us men that even the most refined of us often grate upon some sentiment in a woman, though she may not be romantic—not romantic at all, as people go,—some sentiment which she thought must be so obvious, if we cared a straw about her, and which, though we prize her above the Indies, is, by our dim, horn-eyed, masculine vision, undiscernible. It may be something in itself the airiest of trifles: the anniversary of a day in which the first kiss was interchanged, nay, of a violet gathered, a misunderstanding cleared up; and of that anniversary we remember no more than we do of our bells and coral. But she—she remembers it; it is no bells and coral to her. Of course, much is to be said in excuse of man, brute though he be. Consider the multiplicity of his occupations, the practical nature of his cares. But granting the validity of all such excuse, there is in man an original obtuseness of fibre as regards sentiment in comparison with the delicacy of woman's. It comes, perhaps, from the same hardness of constitution which forbids us the luxury of ready tears. Thus it is very difficult for the wisest man to understand thoroughly a woman. Goethe says somewhere that the highest genius in man must have much of the woman in it. If this be true, the highest genius alone in man can comprehend and explain the nature of woman; because it is not remote from him, but an integral part of his masculine self. I am not sure, however, that it necessitates the highest genius, but rather a special idiosyncrasy in genius which the highest may or may not have. I think Sophocles a higher genius than Euripides; but Euripides has that idiosyncrasy, and Sophocles not. I doubt whether women would accept Goethe as their interpreter with the same readiness with which they would

accept Schiller. Shakespeare, no doubt, excels all poets in the comprehension of women, in his sympathy with them in the woman-part of his nature which Goethe ascribes to the highest genius; but, putting aside that "monster," I do not remember any English poet whom we should consider conspicuously eminent in that lore, unless it be the prose poet, now-a-days generally underrated and little read, who wrote the letters of Clarissa Harlowe. I say all this in vindication of Graham Vane, if, though a very clever man in his way, and by no means uninstructed in human nature, he had utterly failed in comprehending the mysteries which to this poor woman-child seemed to need no key for one who really loved her. But we have said somewhere before in this book that music speaks in a language which cannot explain itself except in music. So speaks, in the human heart, much which is akin to music. Fiction (that is, poetry, whether in form of rhyme or prose) speaks thus pretty often. A reader must be more common-place than, I trust, my gentle readers are, if he suppose that when Isaura symbolised the real hero of her thoughts in the fabled hero of her romance, she depicted him as one of whom the world could say, "That is Graham Vane." I doubt if even a male poet would so vulgarise any woman whom he thoroughly reverenced and loved. She is too sacred to him to be thus unveiled to the public stare; as the sweetest of all ancient love poets says well—

"*Qui sapit in tacito gaudeat ille sinu.*"

But a girl, a girl in her first untold timid love, to let the world know, "*that* is the man I love and would die for!" —if such a girl be, she has no touch of the true woman-genius, and certainly she and Isaura have nothing in common. Well, then, in Isaura's invented hero, though she saw the archetypal form of Graham Vane—saw him as in her young, vague, romantic dreams, idealised, beautified, transfigured—he would have been the vainest of men if he had seen therein the reflection of himself. On the contrary, he said, in the spirit of that jealousy to which he was too prone, "Alas! this, then, is some ideal, already seen perhaps, compared to which how commonplace am I!" and thus persuading himself, no wonder that the sentiments surrounding this unrecognised archetype appeared

to him over-romantic. His taste acknowledged the beauty of form which clothed them; his heart envied the ideal that inspired them. But they seemed so remote from him; they put the dreamland of the writer farther and farther from his workday real life.

In this frame of mind, then, he had written to Savarin, and the answer he received hardened it still more. Savarin had replied, as was his laudable wont in correspondence, the very day he received Graham's letter, and therefore before he had even seen Isaura. In his reply, he spoke much of the success her work had obtained; of the invitations showered upon her, and the sensation she caused in the *salons:* of her future career, with hope that she might even rival Madame de Grantmesnil some day, when her ideas became emboldened by maturer experience, and a closer study of that model of eloquent style,—saying that the young editor was evidently becoming enamoured of his fair contributor; and that Madame Savarin had ventured the prediction that the Signorina's *roman* would end in the death of the heroine, and the marriage of the writer.

CHAPTER V.

And still the weeks glided on: autumn succeeded to summer, the winter to autumn; the season of Paris was at its height. The wondrous capital seemed to repay its Imperial embellisher by the splendour and the joy of its *fêtes*. But the smiles on the face of Paris were hypocritical and hollow. The Empire itself had passed out of fashion. Grave men and impartial observers felt anxious. Napoléon had renounced *les idées Napoléoniennes*. He was passing into the category of constitutional sovereigns, and reigning, not by his old undivided prestige, but by the grace of party. The press was free to circulate complaints as to the past and demands as to the future, beneath which the present reeled—ominous of earthquake. People asked themselves if it were possible that the Empire could coexist with forms of government not imperial, yet not genuinely constitutional, with a majority daily yielding to a minority. The basis of universal suffrage was sapped. About this time the articles in the "*Sens Commun*" signed Pierre Firmin were creating not only considerable sensation, but marked effect on opinion: and the sale of the journal was immense.

Necessarily the repute and the position of Gustave Rameau, as the avowed editor of this potent journal, rose with its success. Nor only his repute and position; banknotes of considerable value were transmitted to him by the publisher, with the brief statement that they were sent by the sole proprietor of the paper as the editor's fair share of profit. The proprietor was never named, but Rameau took it for granted that it was M. Lebeau. M. Lebeau he had never seen since the day he had brought him the list of contributors, and was then referred to the publisher, whom he supposed M. Labeau had secured, and received the first quarter of his salary in advance. The salary was a trifle compared to the extra profits thus generously volunteered.

He called at Lebeau's office, and saw only the clerk, who said that his *patron* was abroad.

Prosperity produced a marked change for the better, if not in the substance of Rameau's character, at least in his manners and social converse. He no longer exhibited that restless envy of rivals, which is the most repulsive symptom of vanity diseased. He pardoned Isaura her success; nay, he was even pleased at it. The nature of her work did not clash with his own kind of writing. It was so thoroughly woman-like, that one could not compare it to a man's. Moreover, that success had contributed largely to the profits by which he had benefited, and to his renown as editor of the journal which accorded place to this new-found genius. But there was a deeper and more potent cause for sympathy with the success of his fair young contributor. He had imperceptibly glided into love with her —a love very different from that with which poor Julie Caumartin flattered herself she had inspired the young poet. Isaura was one of those women for whom, even in natures the least chivalric, love—however ardent—cannot fail to be accompanied with a certain reverence,—the reverence with which the ancient knighthood, in its love for women, honoured the ideal purity of womanhood itself. Till then Rameau had never revered any one.

On her side, brought so frequently into communication with the young conductor of the journal in which she wrote, Isaura entertained for him a friendly, almost sister-like affection.

I do not think that, even if she had never known the Englishman, she would have really become in love with Rameau, despite the picturesque beauty of his countenance, and the congeniality of literary pursuits; but perhaps she might have *fancied* herself in love with him. And till one, whether man or woman, has known real love, fancy is readily mistaken for it. But little as she had seen of Graham, and that little not in itself wholly favourable to him, she knew in her heart of hearts that his image would never be replaced by one equally dear. Perhaps in those qualities that placed him in opposition to her she felt his attractions. The poetical in woman exaggerates the worth of the practical in man. Still for Rameau her exquisitely kind and sympathising nature conceived one of those sen-

timents which in woman are almost angel-like. We have seen in her letters to Madame de Grantmesnil that from the first he inspired her with a compassionate interest; then the compassion was checked by her perception of his more unamiable and envious attributes. But now those attributes, if still existent, had ceased to be apparent to her, and the compassion became unalloyed. Indeed, it was thus so far increased, that it was impossible for any friendly observer to look at the beautiful face of this youth, prematurely wasted and worn, without the kindliness of pity. His prosperity had brightened and sweetened the expression of that face, but it had not effaced the vestiges of decay; rather perhaps deepened them, for the duties of his post necessitated a regular labour, to which he had been unaccustomed, and the regular labour necessitated, or seemed to him to necessitate, an increase of fatal stimulants. He imbibed absinthe with everything he drank, and to absinthe he united opium. This, of course, Isaura knew not, any more than she knew of his *liaison* with the "Ondine" of his muse; she saw only the increasing delicacy of his face and form, contrasted by his increased geniality and liveliness of spirits, and the contrast saddened her. Intellectually, too, she felt for him compassion. She recognised and respected in him the yearnings of a genius too weak to perform a tithe of what, in the arrogance of youth, it promised to its ambition. She saw, too, those struggles between a higher and a lower self, to which a weak degree of genius, united with a strong degree of arrogance, is so often subjected. Perhaps she overestimated the degree of genius, and what, if rightly guided, it could do; but she did, in the desire of her own heavenlier instinct, aspire to guide it heavenward. And, as if she were twenty years older than himself, she obeyed that desire in remonstrating and warning and urging, and the young man took all these "preachments" with a pleased submissive patience. Such, as the new year dawned upon the grave of the old one, was the position between these two. And nothing more was heard from Graham Vane.

CHAPTER VI.

It has now become due to Graham Vane, and to his place in the estimation of my readers, to explain somewhat more distinctly the nature of the quest in prosecution of which he had sought the aid of the Parisian police, and, under an assumed name, made the acquaintance of M. Lebeau.

The best way of discharging this duty will perhaps be to place before the reader the contents of the letter which passed under Graham's eyes on the day in which the heart of the writer ceased to beat.

"*Confidential.*

"*To be opened immediately after my death, and before the perusal of my will.*

"*Richard King.*

"To Graham Vane, Esq.

"My dear Graham,—By the direction on the envelope of this letter, 'Before the perusal of my will,' I have wished to save you from the disappointment you would naturally experience if you learned my bequest without being prevised of the conditions which I am about to impose upon your honour. You will see ere you conclude this letter that you are the only man living to whom I could intrust the secret it contains and the task it enjoins.

"You are aware that I was not born to the fortune that passed to me by the death of a distant relation, who had, in my earlier youth, children of his own. I was an only son, left an orphan at the age of sixteen with a very slender pittance. My guardians designed me for the medical profession. I began my studies at Edinburgh, and was sent to Paris to complete them. It so chanced that there I lodged in the same house with an artist named Auguste Duval, who, failing to gain his livelihood as a painter, in what—for his style was ambitious—is termed the Historical

School, had accepted the humbler calling of a drawing-master. He had practised in that branch of the profession for several years at Tours, having a good *clientèle* among English families settled there. This *clientèle*, as he frankly confessed, he had lost from some irregularities of conduct. He was not a bad man, but of convivial temper, and easily led into temptation. He had removed to Paris a few months before I made his acquaintance. He obtained a few pupils, and often lost them as soon as gained. He was unpunctual and addicted to drink. But he had a small pension, accorded to him, he was wont to say mysteriously, by some high-born kinsfolk, too proud to own connection with a drawing-master, and on the condition that he should never name them. He never did name them to me, and I do not know to this day whether the story of this noble relationship was true or false. A pension, however, he did receive quarterly from some person or other, and it was an unhappy provision for him. It tended to make him an idler in his proper calling; and whenever he received the payment he spent it in debauch, to the neglect, while it lasted, of his pupils. This man had residing with him a young daughter, singularly beautiful. You may divine the rest. I fell in love with her—a love deepened by the compassion with which she inspired me. Her father left her so frequently, that, living on the same floor, we saw much of each other. Parent and child were often in great need—lacking even fuel or food. Of course I assisted them to the utmost of my scanty means. Much as I was fascinated by Louise Duval, I was not blind to great defects in her character. She was capricious, vain, aware of her beauty, and sighing for the pleasures or the gauds beyond her reach. I knew that she did not love me—there was little, indeed, to captivate her fancy in a poor, threadbare medical student—and yet I fondly imagined that my own persevering devotion would at length win her affections. I spoke to her father more than once of my hope some day to make Louise my wife. This hope, I must frankly acknowledge, he never encouraged. On the contrary, he treated it with scorn,—'His child with her beauty would look much higher,' but he continued all the same to accept my assistance, and to sanction my visits. At length my slender purse was pretty well exhausted, and the luckless

drawing-master was so harassed with petty debts that farther credit became impossible. At this time I happened to hear from a fellow-student that his sister, who was the principal of a lady's school in Cheltenham, had commissioned him to look out for a first-rate teacher of drawing, with whom her elder pupils could converse in French, but who should be sufficiently acquainted with English to make his instructions intelligible to the young. The salary was liberal, the school large and of high repute, and his appointment to it would open to an able teacher no inconsiderable connection among private families. I communicated this intelligence to Duval. He caught at it eagerly. He had learned at Tours to speak English fluently; and as his professional skill was of high order, and he was popular with several eminent artists, he obtained certificates as to his talents, which my fellow-student forwarded to England with specimens of Duval's drawings. In a few days the offer of an engagement arrived, was accepted, and Duval and his daughter set out for Cheltenham. At the eve of their departure, Louise, profoundly dejected at the prospect of banishment to a foreign country, and placing no trust in her father's reform to steady habits, evinced a tenderness for me hitherto new—she wept bitterly. She allowed me to believe that her tears flowed at the thought of parting with me, and even besought me to accompany them to Cheltenham—if only for a few days. You may suppose how delightedly I complied with the request. Duval had been about a week at the watering-place, and was discharging the duties he had undertaken with such unwonted steadiness and regularity that I began sorrowfully to feel I had no longer an excuse for not returning to my studies at Paris, when the poor teacher was seized with a fit of paralysis. He lost the power of movement, and his mind was affected. The medical attendant called in said that he might linger thus for some time, but that, even if he recovered his intellect, which was more than doubtful, he would never be able to resume his profession. I could not leave Louise in circumstances so distressing—I remained. The little money Duval had brought from Paris was now exhausted; and when the day on which he had been in the habit of receiving his quarter's pension came round, Louise was unable even to conjecture how it was to be applied for

It seems that he had always gone for it in person, but to whom he went was a secret which he had never divulged. And at this critical juncture his mind was too enfeebled even to comprehend us when we inquired. I had already drawn from the small capital on the interest of which I had maintained myself; I now drew out most of the remainder. But this was a resource that could not last long. Nor could I, without seriously compromising Louise's character, be constantly in the house with a girl so young, and whose sole legitimate protector was thus afflicted. There seemed but one alternative to that of abandoning her altogether—viz., to make her my wife, to conclude the studies necessary to obtain my diploma, and purchase some partnership in a small country practice with the scanty surplus that might be left of my capital. I placed this option before Louise timidly, for I could not bear the thought of forcing her inclinations. She seemed much moved by what she called my generosity: she consented—we were married. I was, as you may conceive, wholly ignorant of French law. We were married according to the English ceremony and the Protestant ritual. Shortly after our marriage we all three returned to Paris, taking an apartment in a quarter remote from that in which we had before lodged, in order to avoid any harassment to which such small creditors as Duval had left behind him might subject us. I resumed my studies with redoubled energy, and Louise was necessarily left much alone with her poor father in the daytime. The defects in her character became more and more visible. She reproached me for the solitude to which I condemned her; our poverty galled her; she had no kind greeting for me when I returned at evening, wearied out. Before marriage she had not loved me—after marriage, alas! I fear she hated. We had been returned to Paris some months when poor Duval died: he had never recovered his faculties, nor had we ever learned from whom his pension had been received. Very soon after her father's death I observed a singular change in the humour and manner of Louise. She was no longer peevish, irascible, reproachful; but taciturn and thoughtful. She seemed to me under the influence of some suppressed excitement: her cheeks flushed and her eye abstracted. At length, one evening when I returned I found her gone. She did not come back

that night nor the next day. It was impossible for me to conjecture what had become of her. She had no friends, so far as I knew—no one had visited at our squalid apartment. The poor house in which we lodged had no *concierge* whom I could question; but the ground-floor was occupied by a small tobacconist's shop, and the woman at the counter told me that for some days before my wife's disappearance, she had observed her pass the shop-window in going out in the afternoon and returning towards the evening. Two terrible conjectures beset me: either in her walk she had met some admirer, with whom she had fled; or, unable to bear the companionship and poverty of a union which she had begun to loathe, she had gone forth to drown herself in the Seine. On the third day from her flight I received the letter I enclose. Possibly the handwriting may serve you as a guide in the mission I intrust to you:—

'MONSIEUR,—You have deceived me vilely—taken advantage of my inexperienced youth and friendless position to decoy me into an illegal marriage. My only consolation under my calamity and disgrace is, that I am at least free from a detested bond. You will not see me again—it is idle to attempt to do so. I have obtained refuge with relations whom I have been fortunate enough to discover, and to whom I intrust my fate. And even if you could learn the shelter I have sought, and have the audacity to molest me, you would but subject yourself to the chastisement you so richly deserve.

'LOUISE DUVAL.'

"At the perusal of this cold-hearted, ungrateful letter, the love I had felt for this woman—already much shaken by her wayward and perverse temper—vanished from my heart, never to return. But as an honest man, my conscience was terribly stung. Could it be possible that I had unknowingly deceived her—that our marriage was not legal?

"When I recovered from the stun which was the first effect of her letter, I sought the opinion of an *avoué* in the neighbourhood, named Sartiges, and, to my dismay, I learned that while I, marrying according to the customs of

my own country, was legally bound to Louise in England, and could not marry another, the marriage was in all ways illegal for her,—being without the consent of her relations while she was under age—without the ceremonials of the Roman Catholic Church, to which, though I never heard any profession of religious belief from her or her father, it might fairly be presumed that she belonged—and, above all, without the form of civil contract which is indispensable to the legal marriage of a French subject.

"The *avoué* said that the marriage, therefore, in itself was null, and that Louise could, without incurring legal penalties for bigamy, marry again in France according to the French laws; but that, under the circumstances, it was probable that her next of kin would apply on her behalf to the proper court for the formal annulment of the marriage, which would be the most effectual mode of saving her from any molestation on my part, and remove all possible question hereafter as to her single state and absolute right to remarry. I had better remain quiet, and wait for intimation of further proceedings. I knew not what else to do, and necessarily submitted.

"From this wretched listlessness of mind, alternated now by vehement resentment against Louise, now by the reproach of my own sense of honour in leaving that honour in so questionable a point of view, I was aroused by a letter from the distant kinsman by whom hitherto I had been so neglected. In the previous year he had lost one of his two children; the other was just dead: no nearer relation now surviving stood between me and my chance of inheritance from him. He wrote word of his domestic affliction with a manly sorrow which touched me, said that his health was failing, and begged me, as soon as possible, to come and visit him in Scotland. I went, and continued to reside with him till his death, some months afterwards. By his will I succeeded to his ample fortune on condition of taking his name.

"As soon as the affairs connected with this inheritance permitted, I returned to Paris, and again saw M. Sartiges. I had never heard from Louise, nor from any one connected with her since the letter you have read. No steps had been taken to annul the marriage, and sufficient time had elapsed to render it improbable that such steps would be

taken now. But if no such steps were taken, however free from the marriage-bond Louise might be, it clearly remained binding on myself.

"At my request, M. Sartiges took the most vigorous measures that occurred to him to ascertain where Louise was, and what and who was the relation with whom she asserted she had found refuge. The police were employed; advertisements were issued, concealing names, but sufficiently clear to be intelligible to Louise if they came under her eye, and to the effect that if any informality in our marriage existed, she was implored for her own sake to remove it by a second ceremonial—answer to be addressed to the *avoué*. No answer came; the police had hitherto failed of discovering her, but were sanguine of success, when a few weeks after these advertisements a packet reached M. Sartiges, enclosing the certificates annexed to this letter, of the death of Louise Duval at Munich. The certificates, as you will see, are to appearance officially attested and unquestionably genuine. So they were considered by M. Sartiges as well as by myself. Here, then, all inquiry ceased—the police were dismissed. I was free. By little and little I overcame the painful impressions which my ill-starred union and the announcement of Louise's early death bequeathed. Rich, and of active mind, I learned to dismiss the trials of my youth as a gloomy dream. I entered into public life; I made myself a creditable position; became acquainted with your aunt; we were wedded, and the beauty of her nature embellished mine. Alas, alas! two years after our marriage—nearly five years after I had received the certificates of Louise's death—I and your aunt made a summer excursion into the country of the Rhine; on our return we rested at Aix-la-Chapelle. One day while there I was walking alone in the environs of the town, when, on the road, a little girl, seemingly about five years old, in chase of a butterfly, stumbled and fell just before my feet; I took her up, and as she was crying more from the shock of the fall than any actual hurt, I was still trying my best to comfort her, when a lady some paces behind her came up, and in taking the child from my arms as I was bending over her, thanked me in a voice that made my heart stand still; I looked up, and beheld Louise.

"It was not till I had convulsively clasped her hand and uttered her name that she recognised me. I was, no doubt, the more altered of the two—prosperity and happiness had left little trace of the needy, care-worn, threadbare student. But if she were the last to recognise, she was the first to recover self-possession. The expression of her face became hard and set. I cannot pretend to repeat with any verbal accuracy the brief converse that took place between us, as she placed the child on the grass bank beside the path, bade her stay there quietly, and walked on with me some paces as if she did not wish the child to hear what was said.

"The purport of what passed was to this effect: She refused to explain the certificates of her death further than that, becoming aware of what she called the 'persecution' of the advertisements issued and inquiries instituted, she had caused those documents to be sent to the address given in the advertisement, in order to terminate all further molestation. But how they could have been obtained, or by what art so ingeniously forged as to deceive the acuteness of a practised lawyer, I know not to this day. She declared, indeed, that she was now happy, in easy circumstances, and that if I wished to make some reparation for the wrong I had done her, it would be to leave her in peace; and in case—which was not likely—we ever met again, to regard and treat her as a stranger; that she, on her part, never would molest me, and that the certified death of Louise Duval left me as free to marry again as she considered herself to be.

"My mind was so confused, so bewildered, while she thus talked, that I did not attempt to interrupt her. The blow had so crushed me that I scarcely struggled under it; only, as she turned to leave me, I suddenly recollected that the child, when taken from my arms, had called her '*Maman*,' and, judging by the apparent age of the child, it must have been born but a few months after Louise had left me—that it must be mine. And so, in my dreary woe, I faltered out—'But what of your infant? Surely that has on me a claim that you relinquish for yourself. You were not unfaithful to me while you deemed you were my wife?'

"'Heavens! can you insult me by such a doubt? No!'

she cried out, impulsively and haughtily. 'But as I was not legally your wife, the child is not legally yours; it is mine, and only mine. Nevertheless, if you wish to claim it,'—here she paused as in doubt. I saw at once that she was prepared to resign to me the child if I had urged her to do so. I must own, with a pang of remorse, that I recoiled from such a proposal. What could I do with the child? How explain to my wife the cause of my interest in it? If only a natural child of mine, I should have shrunk from owning to Janet a youthful error. But, as it was,—the child by a former marriage—the former wife still living!—my blood ran cold with dread. And if I did take the child—invent what story I might as to its parentage, should I not expose myself, expose Janet, to terrible constant danger? The mother's natural affection might urge her at any time to seek tidings of the child, and in so doing she might easily discover my new name, and, perhaps years hence, establish on me her own claim.

"No, I could not risk such perils. I replied, sullenly, 'You say rightly; the child is yours—only yours.' I was about to add an offer of pecuniary provision for it, but Louise had already turned scornfully towards the bank on which she had left the infant. I saw her snatch from the child's hand some wild flowers the poor thing had been gathering; and how often have I thought of the rude way in which she did it—not as a mother who loves her child. Just then other passengers appeared on the road—two of them I knew—an English couple very intimate with Lady Janet and myself. They stopped to accost me, while Louise passed by with the infant towards the town. I turned in the opposite direction, and strove to collect my thoughts. Terrible as was the discovery thus suddenly made, it was evident that Louise had as strong an interest as myself to conceal it. There was little chance that it would ever be divulged. Her dress and that of the child were those of persons in the richer classes of life. After all, doubtless, the child needed not pecuniary assistance from me, and was surely best off under the mother's care. Thus I sought to comfort and to delude myself.

"The next day Janet and I left Aix-la-Chapelle and returned to England. But it was impossible for me to banish the dreadful thought that Janet was not legally my

wife; that could she even guess the secret lodged in my breast she would be lost to me for ever, even though she died of the separation (you know well how tenderly she loved me). My nature underwent a silent revolution. I had previously cherished the ambition common to most men in public life—the ambition for fame, for place, for power. That ambition left me; I shrank from the thought of becoming too well known, lest Louise or her connections, as yet ignorant of my new name, might more easily learn what the world knew—viz., that I had previously borne another name—the name of her husband—and finding me wealthy and honoured, might hereafter be tempted to claim for herself or her daughter the ties she abjured for both while she deemed me poor and despised But partly my conscience, partly the influence of the angel by my side, compelled me to seek whatever means of doing good to others position and circumstances placed at my disposal. I was alarmed when even such quiet exercise of mind and fortune acquired a sort of celebrity How painfully I shrank from it! The world attributed my dread of publicity to unaffected modesty. The world praised me, and I knew myself an impostor. But the years stole on. I heard no more of Louise or her child, and my fears gradually subsided. Yet I was consoled when the two children born to me by Janet died in their infancy. Had they lived, who can tell whether something might not have transpired to prove them illegitimate?

"I must hasten on. At last came the great and crushing calamity of my life: I lost the woman who was my all in all. At least she was spared the discovery that would have deprived me of the right of tending her deathbed, and leaving within her tomb a place vacant for myself.

"But after the first agonies that followed her loss, the conscience I had so long sought to tranquillise became terribly reproachful. Louise had forfeited all right to my consideration, but my guiltless child had not done so. Did it live still? If so, was it not the heir to my fortunes—the only child left to me? True, I have the absolute right to dispose of my wealth: it is not in land; it is not entailed; but was not the daughter I had forsaken morally the first claimant? was no reparation due to her? You remember that my physician ordered me, some little

time after your aunt's death, to seek a temporary change of scene. I obeyed, and went away no one knew whither. Well, I repaired to Paris; there I sought M. Sartiges, the *avoué*. I found he had been long dead. I discovered his executors, and inquired if any papers or correspondence between Richard Macdonald and himself many years ago were in existence. All such documents, with others not returned to correspondents at his decease, had been burned by his desire. No possible clue to the whereabouts of Louise, should any have been gained since I last saw her, was left. What then to do I knew not. I did not dare to make inquiries through strangers, which, if discovering my child, might also bring to light a marriage that would have dishonoured the memory of my lost saint. I returned to England feeling that my days were numbered. It is to you that I transmit the task of those researches which I could not institute. I bequeath to you, with the exception of trifling legacies and donations to public charities, the whole of my fortune. But you will understand by this letter that it is to be held on a trust which I cannot specify in my will. I could not, without dishonouring the venerated name of your aunt, indicate as the heiress of my wealth a child by a wife living at the time I married Janet. I cannot form any words for such a devise which would not arouse gossip and suspicion, and furnish ultimately a clue to the discovery I would shun. I calculate that, after all deductions, the sum that will devolve to you will be about £220,000. That which I mean to be absolutely and at once yours is the comparatively trifling legacy of £20,000. If Louise's child be not living, or if you find full reason to suppose that, despite appearances, the child is not mine, the whole of my fortune lapses to you: but should Louise be surviving and need pecuniary aid, you will contrive that she may have such an annuity as you may deem fitting, without learning whence it come. You perceive that it is your object, if possible, even more than mine, to preserve free from slur the name and memory of her who was to you a second mother. All ends we desire would be accomplished could you, on discovering my lost child, feel that, without constraining your inclinations, you could make her your *wife*. She would then naturally share with you my fortune, and all claims of

justice and duty would be quietly appeased. She would now be of age suitable to yours. When I saw her at Aix she gave promise of inheriting no small share of her mother's beauty. If Louise's assurance of her easy circumstances were true, her daughter has possibly been educated and reared with tenderness and care. You have already assured me that you have no prior attachment. But if, on discovering this child, you find her already married, or one whom you could not love nor esteem, I leave it implicitly to your honour and judgment to determine what share of the £200,000 left in your hands should be consigned to her. She may have been corrupted by her mother's principles. She may—Heaven forbid!—have fallen into evil courses, and wealth would be misspent in her hands. In that case a competence sufficing to save her from further degradation, from the temptations of poverty, would be all that I desire you to devote from my wealth. On the contrary, you may find in her one who, in all respects, ought to be my chief inheritor. All this I leave in full confidence to you, as being, of all the men I know, the one who unites the highest sense of honour with the largest share of practical sense and knowledge of life. The main difficulty, whatever this lost girl may derive from my substance, will be in devising some means to convey it to her, so that neither she nor those around her may trace the bequest to me. She can never be acknowledged as my child—never! Your reverence for the beloved dead forbids that. This difficulty your clear strong sense must overcome: mine is blinded by the shades of death. You too will deliberately consider how to institute the inquiries after mother and child so as not to betray our secret. This will require great caution. You will probably commence at Paris, through the agency of the police, to whom you will be very guarded in your communications. It is most unfortunate that I have no miniature of Louise, and that any description of her must be so vague that it may not serve to discover her; but such as it is, it may prevent your mistaking for her some other of her name. Louise was above the common height, and looked taller than she was, with the peculiar combination of very dark hair, very fair complexion, and light-grey eyes. She would

now be somewhat under the age of forty. She was not without accomplishments, derived from the companionship with her father. She spoke English fluently; she drew with taste, and even with talent. You will see the prudence of confining research at first to Louise, rather than to the child who is the principal object of it; for it is not till you can ascertain what has become of her that you can trust the accuracy of any information respecting the daughter, whom I assume, perhaps after all erroneously, to be mine. Though Louise talked with such levity of holding herself free to marry, the birth of her child might be sufficient injury to her reputation to become a serious obstacle to such second nuptials, not having taken formal steps to annul her marriage with myself. If not thus re-married, there would be no reason why she should not resume her maiden name of Duval, as she did in the signature of her letter to me: finding that I had ceased to molest her by the inquiries, to elude which she had invented the false statement of her death. It seems probable, therefore, that she is residing somewhere in Paris, and in the name of Duval. Of course the burden of uncertainty as to your future cannot be left to oppress you for an indefinite length of time. If at the end, say, of two years, your researches have wholly failed, consider three-fourths of my whole fortune to have passed to you, and put by the fourth to accumulate, should the child afterwards be discovered, and satisfy your judgment as to her claims on me as her father. Should she not, it will be a reserve fund for your own children. But oh, if my child could be found in time! and oh, if she be all that could win your heart, and be the wife you would select from free choice! I can say no more. Pity me, and judge leniently of Janet's husband.

"R. K."

The key to Graham's conduct is now given;—the deep sorrow that took him to the tomb of the aunt he so revered, and whose honoured memory was subjected to so great a risk; the slightness of change in his expenditure and mode of life, after an inheritance supposed to be so ample; the abnegation of his political ambition; the subject of his inquiries, and the cautious reserve imposed upon them;

above all, the position towards Isaura in which he was so cruelly placed.

Certainly, his first thought in revolving the conditions of his trust had been that of marriage with this lost child of Richard King's, should she be discovered single, disengaged, and not repulsive to his inclinations. Tacitly he subscribed to the reasons for this course alleged by the deceased. It was the simplest and readiest plan of uniting justice to the rightful inheritor with care for a secret so important to the honour of his aunt, of Richard King himself—his benefactor,—of the illustrious house from which Lady Janet had sprung. Perhaps, too, the consideration that by this course a fortune so useful to his career was secured, was not without influence on the mind of a man naturally ambitious. But on that consideration he forbade himself to dwell. He put it away from him as a sin. Yet, to marriage with any one else, until his mission was fulfilled, and the uncertainty as to the extent of his fortune was dispelled, there interposed grave practical obstacles. How could he honestly present himself to a girl and to her parents in the light of a rich man, when in reality he might be but a poor man? how could he refer to any lawyer the conditions which rendered impossible any settlement that touched a shilling of the large sum which at any day he might have to transfer to another? Still, when once fully conscious how deep was the love with which Isaura had inspired him, the idea of wedlock with the daughter of Richard King, if she yet lived and was single, became inadmissible. The orphan condition of the young Italian smoothed away the obstacles to proposals of marriage which would have embarrassed his addresses to girls of his own rank, and with parents who would have demanded settlements. And if he had found Isaura alone on that day on which he had seen her last, he would doubtless have yielded to the voice of his heart, avowed his love, wooed her own, and committed both to the tie of betrothal. We have seen how rudely such yearnings of his heart were repelled on that last interview. His English prejudices were so deeply rooted, that, even if he had been wholly free from the trust bequeathed to him, he would have recoiled from marriage with a girl who, in the ardour for notoriety, could link herself with such associates as Gustave

Rameau, by habits a Bohemian, and by principles a Socialist.

In flying from Paris, he embraced the resolve to banish all thought of wedding Isaura, and to devote himself sternly to the task which had so sacred a claim upon him. Not that he could endure the idea of marrying another, even if the lost heiress should be all that his heart could have worshipped, had that heart been his own to give; but he was impatient of the burden heaped on him,—of the fortune which might not be his, of the uncertainty which paralysed all his ambitious schemes for the future.

Yet, strive as he would—and no man could strive more resolutely—he could not succeed in banishing the image of Isaura. It was with him always; and with it a sense of irreparable loss, of a terrible void, of a pining anguish.

And the success of his inquiries at Aix-la-Chapelle, while sufficient to detain him in the place, was so slight, and advanced by such slow degrees, that it furnished no continued occupation to his restless mind. M. Renard was acute and painstaking. But it was no easy matter to obtain any trace of a Parisian visitor to so popular a Spa so many years ago. The name Duval, too, was so common, that at Aix, as we have seen at Paris, time was wasted in the chase of a Duval who proved not to be the lost Louise. At last M. Renard chanced on a house in which, in the year 1849, two ladies from Paris had lodged for three weeks. One was named Madame Duval, the other Madame Marigny. They were both young, both very handsome, and much of the same height and colouring. But Madame Marigny was the handsomer of the two. Madame Duval frequented the gaming-tables, and was apparently of very lively temper. Madame Marigny lived very quietly, rarely or never stirred out, and seemed in delicate health. She, however, quitted the apartment somewhat abruptly, and, to the best of the lodging-house-keeper's recollection, took rooms in the country near Aix—she could not remember where. About two months after the departure of Madame Marigny, Madame Duval also left Aix, and in company with a French gentleman who had visited her much of late—a handsome man of striking appearance. The lodging-house-keeper did not know what or who he was. She remembered that he used to be announced to Madame

Duval by the name of M. Achille. Madame Duval had never been seen again by the lodging-house-keeper after she had left. But Madame Marigny she had once seen, nearly five years after she had quitted the lodgings—seen her by chance at the railway station, recognised her at once, and accosted her, offering her the old apartment. Madame Marigny had, however, briefly replied that she was only at Aix for a few hours, and should quit it the same day.

The inquiry now turned towards Madame Marigny. The date on which the lodging-house-keeper had last seen her coincided with the year in which Richard King had met Louise. Possibly, therefore, she might have accompanied the latter to Aix at that time, and could, if found, give information as to her subsequent history and present whereabouts.

After a tedious search throughout all the environs of Aix, Graham himself came, by the merest accident, upon the vestiges of Louise's friend. He had been wandering alone in the country round Aix, when a violent thunder-storm drove him to ask shelter in the house of a small farmer, situated in a field, a little off the byway which he had taken. While waiting for the cessation of the storm, and drying his clothes by the fire in a room that adjoined the kitchen, he entered into conversation with the farmer's wife, a pleasant, well-mannered person, and made some complimentary observation on a small sketch of the house in water-colours that hung upon the wall. "Ah," said the farmer's wife, "that was done by a French lady who lodged here many years ago. She drew very prettily, poor thing."

"A lady who lodged here many years ago—how many?"

"Well, I guess somewhere about twenty."

"Ah, indeed! Was it a Madame Marigny?"

"*Bon Dieu!* That was indeed her name. Did you know her? I should be so glad to hear she is well and—I hope—happy."

"I do not know where she is now, and am making inquiries to ascertain. Pray help me. How long did Madame Marigny lodge with you?"

"I think pretty well two months; yes, two months. She left a month after her confinement."

"She was confined here?"

"Yes. When she first came, I had no idea that she was *enciente*. She had a pretty figure, and no one would have guessed it, in the way she wore her shawl. Indeed I only began to suspect it a few days before it happened; and that was so suddenly, that all was happily over before we could send for the *accoucheur*."

"And the child lived?—A girl or a boy?"

"A girl—the prettiest baby."

"Did she take the child with her when she went?"

"No; it was put out to nurse with a niece of my husband's who was confined about the same time. Madame paid liberally in advance, and continued to send money half-yearly, till she came herself and took away the little girl."

"When was that? a little less than five years after she had left it?"

"Why, you know all about it, monsieur; yes, not quite five years after. She did not come to see me, which I thought unkind, but she sent me, through my niece-in-law, a real gold watch and a shawl. Poor dear lady—for lady she was all over,—with proud ways, and would not bear to be questioned. But I am sure she was none of your French light ones, but an honest wife like myself, though she never said so."

"And have you no idea where she was all the five years she was away, or where she went after reclaiming her child?"

"No, indeed, monsieur."

"But her remittances for the infant must have been made by letters, and the letters would have had post-marks?"

"Well, I daresay: I am no scholar myself. But suppose you see Marie Hubert, that is my niece-in-law, perhaps she has kept the envelopes."

"Where does Madame Hubert live?"

"It is just a league off by the short path; you can't miss the way. Her husband has a bit of land of his own, but he is also a carrier—'Max Hubert, carrier,'—written over the door, just opposite the first church you get to.

The rain has ceased, but it may be too far for you to-day."

"Not a bit of it. Many thanks."

"But if you find out the dear lady and see her, do tell her how pleased I should be to hear good news of her and the little one."

Graham strode on under the clearing skies to the house indicated. He found Madame Hubert at home, and ready to answer all questions; but, alas! she had not the envelopes. Madame Marigny, on removing the child, had asked for all the envelopes or letters, and carried them away with her. Madame Hubert, who was as little of a scholar as her aunt-in-law was, had never paid much attention to the post-marks on the envelopes; and the only one that she did remember was the first, that contained a bank-note, and that post-mark was "Vienna."

"But did not Madame Marigny's letters ever give you an address to which to write with news of her child?"

"I don't think she cared much for her child, monsieur. She kissed it very coldly when she came to take it away. I told the poor infant that that was her own mamma; and Madame said, 'Yes, you may call me *maman*,' in a tone of voice—well, not at all like that of a mother. She brought with her a little bag which contained some fine clothes for the child, and was very impatient till the child had got them on."

"Are you quite sure it was the same lady who left the child?"

"Oh, there is no doubt of that. She was certainly *très belle*, but I did not fancy her as aunt did. She carried her head very high, and looked rather scornful. However, I must say she behaved very generously."

"Still you have not answered my question whether her letters contained no address."

"She never wrote more than two letters. One enclosing the first remittance was but a few lines, saying that if the child was well and thriving, I need not write; but if it died or became dangerously ill, I might at any time write a line to Madame M——, *Poste Restante*, Vienna. She was travelling about, but the letter would be sure to reach her sooner or later. The only other letter I had was to apprise me that she was coming to remove the child, and

might be expected in three days after the receipt of her letter."

"And all the other communications from her were merely remittances in blank envelopes?"

"Exactly so."

Graham, finding he could learn no more, took his departure. On his way home, meditating the new idea that his adventure that day suggested, he resolved to proceed at once, accompanied by M. Renard, to Munich, and there learn what particulars could be yet ascertained respecting those certificates of the death of Louise Duval, to which (sharing Richard King's very natural belief that they had been skilfully forged) he had hitherto attached no importance.

CHAPTER VII.

No satisfactory result attended the inquiries made at Munich save indeed this certainty—the certificates attesting the decease of some person calling herself Louise Duval had not been forged. They were indubitably genuine. A lady bearing that name had arrived at one of the principal hotels late in the evening, and had there taken handsome rooms. She was attended by no servant, but accompanied by a gentleman, who, however, left the hotel as soon as he had seen her lodged to her satisfaction. The books of the hotel still retained the entry of her name—Madame Duval, *Française, rentière.* On comparing the handwriting of this entry with the letter from Richard King's first wife, Graham found it differ; but then it was not certain, though probable, that the entry had been written by the alleged Madame Duval herself. She was visited the next day by the same gentleman who had accompanied her on arriving. He dined and spent the evening with her. But no one at the hotel could remember what was the gentleman's name, nor even if he were announced by any name. He never called again. Two days afterwards, Madame Duval was taken ill; a doctor was sent for, and attended her till her death. This doctor was easily found. He remembered the case perfectly—congestion of the lungs, apparently caused by cold caught on her journey. Fatal symptoms rapidly manifested themselves, and she died on the third day from the seizure. She was a young and handsome woman. He had asked her during her short illness if he should not write to her friends—if there were no one she would wish to be sent for. She replied that there was only one friend, to whom she had already written, and who would arrive in a day or two. And on inquiring, it appeared that she had written such a letter, and taken it herself to the post on the morning of the day she was taken ill.

She had in her purse not a large sum, but money enough to cover all her expenses, including those of her funeral, which, according to the law in force at the place, followed very quickly on her decease. The arrival of the friend to whom she had written being expected, her effects were, in the meanwhile, sealed up. The day after her death a letter arrived for her, which was opened. It was evidently written by a man, and apparently by a lover. It expressed an impassioned regret that the writer was unavoidably prevented returning to Munich so soon as he had hoped, but trusted to see his dear *bonton de rose* in the course of the following week; it was only signed Achille, and gave no address. Two or three days after, a lady, also young and handsome, arrived at the hotel, and inquired for Madame Duval. She was greatly shocked at hearing of her decease. When sufficiently recovered to bear being questioned as to Madame Duval's relations and position, she appeared confused; said, after much pressing, that she was no relation to the deceased; that she believed Madame Duval had no relations with whom she was on friendly terms, at least she had never heard her speak of any; and that her own acquaintance with the deceased, though cordial, was very recent. She could or would not give any clue to the writer of the letter signed Achille, and she herself quitted Munich that evening, leaving the impression that Madame Duval had been one of those ladies who, in adopting a course of life at variance with conventional regulations, are repudiated by their relations, and probably drop even their rightful names.

Achille never appeared; but a few days after, a lawyer at Munich received a letter from another at Vienna, requesting, in compliance with a client's instructions, the formal certificates of Louise Duval's death. These were sent as directed, and nothing more about the ill-fated woman was heard of. After the expiration of the time required by law, the seals were removed from the effects, which consisted of two *malles* and a dressing-case. But they only contained the articles appertaining to a lady's wardrobe or toilet. No letters—not even another note from Achille—no clue, in short, to the family or antecedents of the deceased. What then had become of these effects, no one at the hotel could give a clear or satisfactory

account. It was said by the mistress of the hotel, rather sullenly, that they had, she supposed, been sold by her predecessor, and by order of the authorities, for the benefit of the poor.

If the lady who had represented herself as Louise Duval's acquaintance had given her own name, which doubtless she did, no one recollected it. It was not entered in the books of the hotel, for she had not lodged there; nor did it appear that she had allowed time for formal examination by the civil authorities. In fact, it was clear that poor Louise Duval had been considered as an adventuress by the hotel-keeper and the medical attendant at Munich; and her death had excited so little interest, that it was strange that even so many particulars respecting it could be gleaned.

After a prolonged but fruitless stay at Munich, Graham and M. Renard repaired to Vienna; there, at least, Madame Marigny had given an address, and there she might be heard of.

At Vienna, however, no research availed to discover a trace of any such person, and in despair Graham returned to England in the January of 1870, and left the further prosecution of his inquiries to M. Renard, who, though obliged to transfer himself to Paris for a time, promised that he would leave no stone unturned for the discovery of Madame Marigny; and Graham trusted to that assurance when M. Renard, rejecting half of the large gratuity offered him, added, "*Je suis Français;* this with me has ceased to be an affair of money; it has become an affair that involves my *amour propre.*"

CHAPTER VIII.

If Graham Vane had been before caressed and courted for himself, he was more than ever appreciated by polite society, now that he added the positive repute of wealth to that of a promising intellect. Fine ladies said that Graham Vane was a match for any girl. Eminent politicians listened to him with a more attentive respect, and invited him to selecter dinner-parties. His cousin the Duke urged him to announce his candidature for the county, and purchase back, at least, the old *Stamm-schloss*. But Graham obstinately refused to entertain either proposal, continued to live as economically as before in his old apartments, and bore with an astonishing meekness of resignation the unsolicited load of fashion heaped upon his shoulders. At heart he was restless and unhappy. The mission bequeathed to him by Richard King haunted his thoughts like a spectre not to be exorcised. Was his whole life to be passed in the weary sustainment of an imposture which in itself was gall and wormwood to a nature constitutionally frank and open? Was he for ever to appear a rich man and live as a poor one? Was he till his deathbed to be deemed a sordid miser whenever he refused a just claim on his supposed wealth, and to feel his ambition excluded from the objects it earnestly coveted, and which he was forced to appear too much of an Epicurean philosopher to prize?

More torturing than all else to the man's innermost heart was the consciousness that he had not conquered, could not conquer, the yearning love with which Isaura had inspired him, and yet that against such love all his reasonings, all his prejudices, more stubbornly than ever were combined. In the French newspapers which he had glanced over while engaged in his researches in Germany —nay, in German critical journals themselves—he had seen so many notices of the young author—highly eulogistic, it is true, but which to his peculiar notions were more offensive than if they had been sufficiently condemnatory of her work to discourage her from its repe-

tition,—notices which seemed to him the supreme impertinences which no man likes exhibited towards the woman to whom he would render the chivalrous homage of respect. Evidently this girl had become as much public property as if she had gone on the stage. Minute details of her personal appearance—of the dimples on her cheek—of the whiteness of her arms—of her peculiar way of dressing her hair—anecdotes of her from childhood (of course invented, but how could Graham know that?)—of the reasons why she had adopted the profession of author instead of that of the singer—of the sensation she had created in certain *salons* (to Graham, who knew Paris so well, *salons* in which he would not have liked his wife to appear)—of the compliments paid to her by *grands seigneurs* noted for their *liaisons* with ballet-dancers, or by authors whose genius soared far beyond the *flammantia mœnia* of a world confined by respect for one's neighbours' land-marks,—all this, which belongs to ground of personal gossip untouched by English critics of female writers—ground especially favoured by Continental, and, I am grieved to say, by American journalists,—all this was to the sensitive Englishman much what the minute inventory of Egeria's charms would have been to Numa Pompilius. The nymph, hallowed to him by secret devotion, was vulgarised by the noisy hands of the mob, and by the popular voices, which said, "We know more about Egeria than you do." And when he returned to England, and met with old friends familiar to Parisian life, who said, "Of course you have read the Cicogna's *roman*. What do you think of it? Very fine writing, I daresay, but above me. I go in for 'Les Mystères de Paris' or 'Monte Christo.' But I even find Georges Sand a bore,"—then as a critic Graham Vane fired up, extolled the *roman* he would have given his ears for Isaura never to have written; but retired from the contest muttering only, "How can I—I, Graham Vane—how can I be such an idiot—how can I in every hour of the twenty-four sigh to myself, 'What are other women to me?—Isaura, Isaura!'"

END OF VOL. I.

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